A207 FROM ENLIGHTENMENT TO ROMANTICISM, c.1780–1830

The Open University

A Life of Napoleon

Stendhal

Translated by Roland Gant

Edited by Antony Lentin

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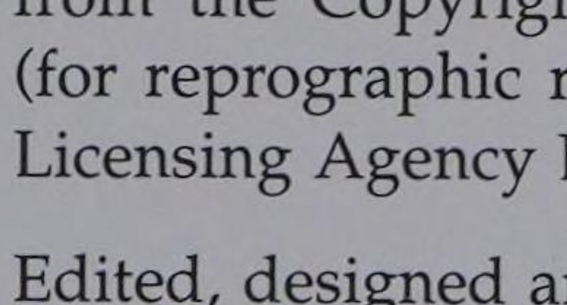

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CHRONOLOGY

Youth and rise 1769–96 (chapters 1–3)

1768: France purchases Corsica from Genoa

1769–79: birth and childhood in Corsica

1779–85: military school, Brienne and Paris; commissioned in artillery

1789–93: French Revolution involves him in Corsican politics; sides with Jacobins, flees Corsica

First Coalition against France 1793–7 (Britain, Austria, Prussia)

1793: commands artillery in recapture of Toulon from British; promoted to brigadier-general

1796: marries Josephine de Beauharnais; is given command in Italy

Campaigns in Italy and Egypt 1796–99 (chapters 4–15)

1796–7: defeats Austrians at Lodi, Arcola, Rivoli; makes peace of Leoben and Campo Formio with Austria

Second Coalition against France 1798–1802 (Britain, Austria, Russia)

1798: conquers Egypt but his fleet destroyed by Nelson at Aboukir Bay

1799: Syrian campaign fails at Acre; returns to France

The consulate 1799–1804 (chapters 16–31)

1799: overthrows Directory (18th Brumaire/9 November); becomes First Consul

1800: establishes commission to draw up Civil Code (Code Napoléon); crosses Alps into Italy, defeats Austrians at Marengo; assassination attempt ('the infernal machine')

1801: peace of Lunéville with Austria; concludes Concordat with the Pope

1802: peace of Amiens with Britain; becomes president of Italian (Cisalpine) republic; promulgates Concordat; creates Legion of Honour; becomes consul for life

1803: war with Britain resumed; at Boulogne for invasion of England

1804: Cadoudal plot; execution of the Duke d'Enghien; promulgation of Civil Code; Napoleon crowned Emperor of the French

The 'Grand Empire' 1805–11 (chapters 32–54)

Third Coalition against France 1805, Fourth Coalition 1806–9, Fifth Coalition 1809–12 (Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia)

1805: crowned King of Italy; French naval defeat at Trafalgar; abandons plans to invade England

1805–7: wars with Austria, Russia, Prussia; victory over Austria at Ulm (1805), over Austria and Russia at Austerlitz (1805)

1806: declares Continental System (economic warfare against Britain); creates Confederation of the Rhine and abolishes Holy Roman Empire; victory over Prussia at Jena; Napoleon's brothers Joseph and Louis become kings of Holland and Naples

1807: costly victory over Russia at Eylau and Friedland; meets Alexander I of Russia at Tilsit; Russia becomes ally, Prussia is humbled in Treaty of Tilsit; Napoleon's brother Jérôme becomes King of Westphalia; reinforces Continental System to ruin British trade; French invade Portugal

1808: invades Spain; makes Joseph Bonaparte King of Spain; Peninsular War (1808–14) begins; meets Alexander I of Russia at Erfurt

1809: defeats Austria at Wagram; annexes Illyria and Papal States; revolt in Tyrol; divorces Josephine

1810: marries Austrian princess Marie-Louise; annexes Holland and Hanseatic towns of north Germany

1811: birth of heir ('King of Rome')

Fall of the empire 1812–14 (chapters 55–74)

Sixth Coalition against France 1812–14 (Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, Sweden)

1812: invades Russia; indecisive victory at Borodino; capture and burning of Moscow; disastrous retreat

1813: Austria, Prussia, Sweden declare war; Napoleon defeated at Leipzig (16–19 October); French expelled from Germany and Spain

1814: after obstinate defence, Napoleon abdicates (12 April); exiled to Elba

The Hundred Days and St Helena 1815–21 (chapters 75–87)

Seventh Coalition against France 1815 (Britain, Austria, Prussia)

1815: the Hundred Days (20 March–22 June); lands in France, wins support of army, enters Paris; 14–18 June, Waterloo campaign ends in rout; second abdication; Napoleon seeks asylum in England but is taken to St Helena

1816: publication of Warden's *Letters from St Helena*

1817–18: Stendhal writes *A Life of Napoleon*

1818: publication of Mme de Staël's critique of Napoleon in *Reflections on the Main Events of the French Revolution*

1821: Napoleon's death on St Helena

1822: publication of O'Meara's *Napoleon in Exile or a Voice from St Helena*

1823: publication of Las Cases's *Mémorial de Sainte Hélène*

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Stendhal's *Life of Napoleon*, written between November 1817 and August 1818, is a unique historical account in several respects. First and foremost, it is the only biography of Napoleon by a contemporary eyewitness. Stendhal (Henri Beyle) served virtually throughout the Napoleonic era and across Napoleonic Europe, in France, Italy, Germany, Austria and Russia, in the army and administration. He saw Napoleon at first hand; he attended meetings of the Council of State as a commissioner of audit, one of the young men whom Napoleon picked out as high-flyers for the future running of his continental 'Grand Empire'. Stendhal also attended Napoleon's imperial court, the subject of caustic and amusing descriptions by the novelist-to-be.

Stendhal supplemented his own impressions with a wealth of other primary sources, on which indeed most of his account is based. He was scrupulous, as he says in his Preface, to consult all that was known on the history of Napoleon in 1818, and this lends his narrative additional reliability and authority.

Above all, Stendhal's account – individual, outspoken and passionately engaged – reminds us that Napoleon was still very much alive: not only at St Helena, hoping against hope to return to Europe, but also, in the public mind, in Europe itself. Here he remained, even after his fall, the most hotly debated and controversial figure in all history, whether admired and idolized or hated, feared and calumniated. It was a mark of his almost superhuman reputation that the allied powers who had sent him to St Helena resolved in 1818 to keep him there, so dangerous to the peace of Europe did they deem his person, his image and the influence of his ideas. It was a criminal offence in Restoration France to express views favourable to Napoleon, and Stendhal was aware that his book stood little chance of publication there. (It first appeared in full in 1929, almost a century after his death.) Nevertheless he felt impelled to record what he had seen and thought.

Another writer under the same compulsion was the influential Germaine de Staël, who, from being an admirer of Napoleon, became one of his foremost critics and one of his most eminent victims, having been herself exiled from France at his order. In her *Reflections on the Main Events of the French*

Revolution, published in 1818 shortly after her death, Staël wrote a penetrating critique of Napoleon and his influence. It was this book that infuriated Stendhal and stiffened his resolve to complete his own book in defence of Napoleon. Stendhal too had his reservations, and they went to the heart of Napoleon's character and the character of his regime, but for all that Napoleon remained in his eyes an outstanding hero of unparalleled greatness, a tragic genius who left an undying mark on the history, thought and imagination of France and Europe. Stendhal's *Life of Napoleon* is valuable not only as an account of what happened in those turbulent and momentous years, but also as an attempt – at once passionate and cool, committed and detached – to come to terms with what had happened and to grasp and define the character of the Man of Destiny and the spirit of his age.

Roland Gant (1919–93), who translated Stendhal's *Life of Napoleon,* was a man of letters: a writer of travel literature and fiction, a poet and translator. He translated French verse, notably Verlaine. He was among the first to recognize the work of the First World War poet Edward Thomas. For many years he was editorial director of literature at Heinemann, where he published, among others, works by Anthony Powell, Paul Scott, Peter Ustinov and Randolph Churchill. For several years before his death, Roland Gant and his wife (also a writer) were working on a biography of her ancestor, General Gourgaud, who accompanied Napoleon to St Helena and left a valuable record of his final exile.

Roland Gant's pioneering translation of Stendhal's *Life of Napoleon,* published by the Rodale Press in 1956, forms the basis of this edition. It is a readable and lively version. In the interests of accuracy, both linguistic and historical, I have revised and amended it throughout without, I hope, any sacrifice of readability.

Gant's translation was based on the scholarly edition of the text published by Louis Royer in the *Collection des Oeuvres Complètes de Stendhal,* Librairie Honoré Champion, Paris, 1929, now available in the edition edited by Victor del Litto and Ernest Abravanel, Geneva, 1967–74, and reprinted by Slatkine, Geneva and Paris, 1986. I have checked the translation against the latter edition.

Gant reproduced from Royer's edition many of Stendhal's footnotes; he also included, in the form of footnotes, marginal comments made on the manuscript by Stendhal and by his Italian friend and critic, Giuseppe Vismara; notes which Stendhal made in relation to the book but did not incorporate in it; and some brief editorial notes. I have added from the 1986 edition further marginal comments by Stendhal and Vismara and some further notes by Stendhal. Bearing in mind the importance of the work as a historical narrative, I have also added (in square brackets) further brief explanatory references where necessary in the form of editorial footnotes. Finally, I have restored Stendhal's projected chapter headings, most of which are omitted in Gant's version, and I have added a brief chronology. An index is also provided.

A. LENTIN, The Open University, 2002

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

'On May 15th, 1796, General Bonaparte entered Milan at the head of that young army which had shortly before crossed the Bridge of Lodi and taught the world that after all these centuries Caesar and Alexander had a successor.'

This is the opening sentence of one of the world's greatest novels, written in Italy by a French consul and published in 1839 – Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme*. In that beginning there is the echo of another book by Stendhal, written more than twenty years earlier, a *Life of Napoleon* which was not published until after his death.

The personality, motives, achievements and influence of men like Caesar, Alexander and Napoleon exert a limitless and permanent fascination; Napoleon most of all because his world and times are the nearest to us and the most easily understood. There is no end to the curiosity about him, to the distortion of the facts in books, the theatre and cinema, to the theorizing and romanticizing. Little corporal, great general, ruthless tyrant, brilliant legislator, vulgar Corsican upstart, in every role in which he is viewed there is basis for speculation and wonder. The century and a half which separate him from us are not the excuse for the lack of objective approach because, as Zola said, 'Napoleon's destiny was a hammer blow that cracked the brains of his times.' Napoleon's contemporaries found just as much difficulty in grasping the essentials of his character and the breadth of his influence as we have today. The journal of General Gourgaud, who accompanied the deposed emperor into exile on St Helena, and the *Mémorial de Sainte Hélène* by Las Cases were written under the spell which Napoleon cast over his adherents, just as Sir Hudson Lowe's memoirs are filled with the critical reserve to be expected from the man responsible for the safekeeping of Europe's most illustrious prisoner.

Stendhal, who lived through his rise, reign and fall, was fascinated by Napoleon and wrote in *Le Rouge et le Noir* that Julien Sorel had for many years never lived an hour without telling himself that 'Bonaparte, an obscure and penniless lieutenant, had made himself master of the world by his sword.' But Stendhal's *Life of Napoleon is* excitingly different

from other contemporary biographies in conception, method of execution, and style.

Stendhal, born Henri Beyle in Grenoble in 1783, noted in 1802 his intention of writing three prose works, one on Napoleon, one on the Revolution, and one on the great men of the revolutionary period. He added, with breathtaking calm and sureness of purpose, 'begin these works at the age of thirty-three, fifteen years from now.'

As a clerk in the War Office, Stendhal was posted to Milan during Napoleon's second Italian campaign. A cousin obtained for him a commission as second lieutenant in the Dragoons and he became ADC to General Michaud. Despite the admiration with which he wrote of military life, Stendhal was neither an enthusiastic nor a brilliant soldier and he resigned his commission after a few months and returned to Paris. He was no more outstanding as playwright and business man, and he returned to the army to take part in the Russian campaign as a non-combatant quartermaster-officer with the rank of Director-General of Reserve Supplies. He was very proud in later years of having taken part in the retreat from Moscow. He left the city on October 10th, 1812, and after forced marches and an attack by the Russians (he nevertheless managed to read a few pages each evening of a book by Madame du Deffand) he arrived in Paris on January 31st, 1813. Napoleon, he wrote, was not beaten by men but 'by his own pride and by the climate', and he added in a footnote, with his customary precision, that the winter had not set in early but, on the contrary, there was wonderful weather in Moscow on the day he left, with a frost of only three degrees and bright sunshine.

Stendhal never took part in a battle but, on his recall to the army after the retreat from Russia, he witnessed the battle of Bautzen – 'we had an excellent view, from noon until three, of everything that can be seen of a battle, which is to say nothing.' A quarter of a century later he used his impressions of Bautzen to describe Fabrice's participation in the battle of Waterloo in *La Chartreuse de Parme*. He went to Milan on sick leave after a bout of influenza, and it was there, in 1817 and after the precise interval of fifteen years which he had planned, that he began his *Life of Napoleon*. Behind him he had his personal experience in the *Grande Armée*, the knowledge of

Napoleon's final defeat, and France's rejection of her erstwhile leader. Stendhal read of Waterloo whilst in Venice and commented in his journal, 'All is lost, even honour.'

He considered Napoleon's banishment to St Helena to be a cruel and shameful action on England's part. He was reminded of Plutarch's heroes, he wrote at the end of the *Life*. When he visited Paris in 1817, for the first time in two years, he found the anti-Bonapartist reaction in full spate, and he was disgusted by the way the French had turned against the general and emperor whom they had idolized in the years when he led them to glory.

He found there were people still passionately interested in Napoleon. Byron, 'a charming young man who looked eighteen although twenty-eight, with the profile of an angel', plied him with questions about Napoleon and the Russian campaign as they strolled about the Scala in Milan.

In revolt against the denigration of Napoleon and conscious, as he talked about it, of the scope of the epic which he had witnessed, he translated an article on Napoleon from the *Edinburgh Review* and used it as the framework for his book, filling in with his own comments and with extracts from other books. He stated in his preface that there were 'two or three hundred authors ... the editor has done no more than make a collection of those sentences which seemed to him to be to the point.' He re-wrote much of what he borrowed and welded the book into something indubitably his. As the manuscript took shape he gave it to his friends, and their pencilled remarks may still be seen on the draft in the Grenoble Municipal Library.

He dropped his work for six months and when he resumed it, on his return from Paris in the middle of 1818, he had before him Madame de Staël's *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française*. He found it anti-Bonapartist and referred to it in his *Life of Napoleon* by saying that he wrote to refute a slander.

In 1821 Stendhal left Milan suddenly after having been watched by the Austrian police as a suspected French Government spy. He left *Napoleon* with a friend in Milan with whom it remained until Stendhal's death in 1842.

He did not forget his project, however, and almost twenty years later he set out to write an entirely new book entitled *Mémoires sur Napoléon* into which he introduced more personal anecdotes and passages copied from the books which had been published in the interval. This second manuscript remained unfinished and was sent to join the original *Life* in Milan.

When he was fifty-three Stendhal wrote, 'My love for Napoleon is the only passion remaining to me; yet it does not prevent my seeing his faults and the petty weaknesses with which he can be reproached.' In this objective approach, in the study of details, and by the examination of the moral effect Napoleon exerted not only on the French but on the peoples he conquered, Stendhal inaugurated an entirely fresh historical method. His *Life of Napoleon* is an analytical record of the moral and ideological atmosphere of Napoleonic Europe as well as being a great writer's unforgettable portrait of one of the greatest men history has known, a portrait showing his weaknesses and failures as well as his grandeur and successes.

ROLAND GANT, 1956

PREFACE

Nam neque te regni summa ad fastigia vexit
Lucinae favor et nascendi inglorius ordo,
Vivida sed bello virtus tutataque ferro
Libertas.

Aldrich, 1689, 50: 497[1]

There are some two or three hundred authors of this *Life* in three hundred octavo pages. The editor has done no more than make a collection of those sentences which seemed to him to be to the point.

Since everyone has a definite idea about Napoleon, this *Life* cannot fully satisfy anyone. It is equally difficult to please one's readers by writing on subjects of either too little or too great an interest.

Each passing year will bring further clarifications; famous people will die and their memoirs will be published. What follows is an abstract of what was known on the subject on February 1st, 1818.

Fifty years hence, the history of Napoleon will have to be rewritten every year as and when the memoirs of Fouché, Lucien, Réal, Regnault, Caulaincourt, Sieyès, le Brun, etc., etc., are published.[2]

STENDHAL

[1] ['For it was not right of birth or due order of succession that raised you to supreme power in the state, but outstanding military prowess and the preservation of Liberty by the sword.' From a poem written to celebrate the accession of William III in 1688.]

[2] [Of these contemporaries of Napoleon, the memoirs of Fouché were published in 1824, of Lucien Bonaparte in 1818, of Réal in 1835. Caulaincourt's memoirs were published only in 1933.]

1 BONAPARTE'S BIRTH; HIS FAMILY; THE BRIENNE MILITARY ACADEMY; THE MILITARY ACADEMY AT PARIS; HE RETURNS TO CORSICA

> What part of the inhabited world has not heard of the victories of this great man, and of the marvels of his life? They are related everywhere. The Frenchman who boasts of them tells the foreigner nothing new, and whatever I may say to you on the subject today, I shall, anticipating your thoughts, have to answer the secret reproach of having remained much inferior to my subject.
>
> Bossuet, *Funeral Oration on the Prince de Condé* [1686]

I am writing the history of Napoleon to refute a slander.[3] This is an unwise proceeding, because this slander has been spread abroad by the leading talent of the age against a man who, for the past four years, has been exposed to the vengeance of all the powers on earth. I am restricted in the expression of my thoughts. I lack ability, and my noble adversary has the support of all the courts of summary jurisdiction.[4] Furthermore, quite apart from her fame, this opponent enjoyed great wealth, a considerable reputation in the salons of Europe, and all the social advantages. She flattered even the most humble names, and her posthumous fame will not fail to arouse the enthusiasm of all those noble writers who are ever ready to let themselves be moved by the misfortunes of those in authority, whatsoever their nature. The following summary is not, strictly speaking, a history – it is a historical account intended for the contemporary spectator of events.

Napoleon was born on August 15th, 1769, at Ajaccio to Charles Bonaparte and Letitia Ramolini. His father, who was not without ability, served under Paoli,[5] and after the French had occupied the island of Corsica,[6] he was several times

[3] [Germaine de Staël's *Reflections on the Main Events of the French Revolution,* 1818.]

[4] [The expression of views favourable to Napoleon was made a criminal offence in France in November 1815.]

[5] [Fought for Corsican independence.]

[6] [In 1768.]

Deputy of the nobility. The family originally came from Tuscany, principally from the little town of San Miniato where it had been established for several hundred years. The historian Mazzucchelli mentions several Bonapartes who were distinguished men of letters. In 1796 there was still a Bonaparte at San Miniato. He was a Chevalier de Saint-Etienne, rich and much respected, who prided himself on his connection with the young conqueror of Italy. When Napoleon was powerful, sycophants discovered or invented proofs which made him a descendant of the Treviso tyrants of the Middle Ages, a claim probably as unfounded as that of the émigrés who sought to show that Napoleon came from the lowest ranks of the people. His elder sister was educated at Saint-Cyr;[7] this fact alone proves that the Bonaparte family belonged to the old nobility.

The name of Napoleon is common in Italy. It was one of the names adopted by the Orsini family, and it was introduced into the Bonaparte family through an alliance made during the sixteenth century with the house of Lomellini.[8]

Count Marbeuf took over the command in Corsica and became attached to Madame Letitia Bonaparte. He procured for Napoleon a place at the military academy at Brienne, which he entered when very young. There Napoleon distinguished himself by his gift for mathematics and by a singular love of reading. But he offended his teachers by the stubbornness with which he refused to learn Latin according to the accepted methods. In vain they tried to make him learn Latin verses and the basic rules by heart. He would never write Latin compositions or speak the language. To punish him for his obstinacy, he was kept at the school a year or two longer than the other pupils. He spent those years in solitude and silence. He never joined in the games of his school-fellows. He never said a word to them. Dreamy, silent, and

[7] [France's leading school for girls of noble birth.]

[8] The following passage, from the *History of the House of Orsini* by Sansovino, may be of passing interest: 'Ma molti più furono i Napoleoni, perchè in tutti i tempi gli orecchi italiani, o nella pace, o nella guerra, udirono questa nobilissima voce in uomini segnalati' [But there were many more Napoleons, because in every age, in peace or war, Italians have heard this illustrious name borne by distinguished men], Vol. II, p. 20.

solitary, he was known among them by his passion for imitating the manner, and even the language, of the great men of antiquity. He affected especially the short, sententious sentences of the Spartans.

It is one of Europe's misfortunes that Napoleon was educated at a royal school, that is to say, at a place where a sophisticated education is usually given by priests, and is always fifty years behind the times. Had he been brought up in an establishment remote from government influence, he might, perhaps, have studied Hume[9] and Montesquieu.[10] He might, perhaps, have grasped the strength which public opinion confers upon a government.

Napoleon gained admission to the Royal Military Academy in Paris. In the newspapers of the time may be found an account of how, during one of the first balloon ascents to be made by Blanchard from the Champ de Mars, a young man from the Military Academy tried to force the barrier and did everything possible to climb into the basket; that young man was Bonaparte.

Until now, few anecdotes on this period of his life have been collected. When Turenne was being discussed, a lady remarked: 'I would rather he had not burned the Palatinate.'[11]

'What does that matter,' Napoleon replied quickly, 'if the fire was necessary to his plans?'

Napoleon was only fourteen years old at the time.

In 1785 he sat for his entrance examination to the artillery. Out of 36 officer vacancies he was twelfth, and he was gazetted as a second lieutenant to the regiment at La Fère. In his report, in the section reserved for the professors' remarks, beside his name may be read:

'Corsican by character and by nationality, this young man will go far should circumstances prove favourable to him.'

9 [Eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher and historian.]

10 [Eighteenth-century French philosopher and political thinker; author of *On the Spirit of the Laws*, 1748.]

11 [Marshal Turenne's devastation of the Palatinate in western Germany, 1688, was considered a blot on the reign of Louis XIV.]

That same year Napoleon lost his father, who died at Montpellier. This misfortune was to some extent palliated by the extreme fondness shown him by his great-uncle Lucien, Archdeacon of Ajaccio. This venerable old man combined rare goodness with a great understanding of mankind. It is said that he discovered the extraordinary talents of his great-nephew, and that he early predicted his future greatness.

It appears that, during the first years which Napoleon spent in the service, he divided his time between his duties as a lieutenant and frequent visits to his family. He wrote a history of Corsica and sent it to Abbé Raynal at Marseilles. The famous historian approved of the young officer's book, advised him to have it printed, and said that it was a work that would endure. It is also said that Napoleon wrote his book in the form of a memorandum to the government. This memorandum was presented and has doubtless been lost for ever (1790).[12]

The Revolution began. Saint-Cyr was destroyed. Napoleon went to fetch his sister and escort her back to Corsica. As they were walking along the quay at Toulon, they were on the point of being thrown into the sea by the mob, which pursued them with cries of 'Down with the aristocrats! Down with the black cockade!'[13] Realizing that it was a black ribbon on his sister's hat that these worthy patriots had mistaken for a black cockade, Napoleon stopped, removed the ribbon and threw it over the parapet.

In 1791 he was gazetted second captain to the 4th Artillery Regiment. During the winter of that same year he returned to Corsica and there formed a regiment of volunteers, whose command he was allowed to assume without forfeiting his rank of captain. He had occasion to show coolness and courage during a brawl which arose between his regiment and the National Guard of Ajaccio. Several men were killed and there was much disorder in the town. France declared war on the King of Sardinia. The young captain gave the first indication of his military daring by occupying the small islands which lie between Corsica and Sardinia.

12 [It was published in 1843.]

13 [Aristocratic emblem.]

2 *BONAPARTE'S ROLE IN CORSICA*

Napoleon became an intimate friend of the celebrated Paoli and of Pozzo di Borgo, a young Corsican full of ability and ambition.[14] They later became mortal enemies. Friends of Napoleon claim that, from the orders which he heard Paoli give, he guessed that the old general intended to rebel against France. Napoleon ventured to oppose this plan so boldly that ultimately he was imprisoned. He escaped and fled to the mountains, but there he fell into the hands of a band of peasants belonging to the opposing faction. They brought him back to Pozzo di Borgo, who decided to get rid of a dangerous rival by handing him over to the English. The order, which could have thrown Bonaparte into prison for part of his youth, did not take effect, because the peasants guarding him, either from pity or because they had been won over by him, allowed him to escape.

This second flight took place the night before the day on which he was to have been taken on board an English vessel cruising off the coast. This time he succeeded in reaching the town of Calvi. There he found two French commissioners to whom he revealed the plans of Paoli and of Pozzo di Borgo. Soon afterwards he left Corsica and rejoined the Army of Nice, to which his regiment belonged.

3 *THE SIEGE OF TOULON; BONAPARTE RETURNS TO PARIS; HIS MARRIAGE TO JOSEPHINE*

Napoleon was put in charge of supervising the batteries between San Remo and Nice. Soon after he was sent on a mission to Marseilles and the neighbouring towns. He procured various kinds of munitions for the army. He was sent on a similar mission to Auxonne, La Fère and Paris. While travelling through the south of France, he encountered

[14] [Pozzo di Borgo was in the Russian diplomatic service during the Napoleonic Wars. He was Russian ambassador in Paris at the time Stendhal was writing.]

civil war between the departments and the Convention (1793).[15] It appeared difficult to obtain from the towns in open revolt against the government the munitions required by the army of that same government. Napoleon succeeded, however, in attaining his object, at times by calling upon the patriotism of the insurgents, at other times by taking advantage of their fears. At Avignon, some of the Federalists[16] tried to get him to join them. He replied that he would never fight a civil war. While his mission kept him in the town he had ample opportunity of observing the total incapacity of the generals of both parties, royalist and republican. It is common knowledge that Avignon surrendered to Carteaux, who having been a bad painter became a worse general. The young captain wrote a pamphlet ridiculing the history of this siege. He called it: *The Lunch of Three Soldiers at Avignon*, 1793.[17]

On his return to the Army of Italy from Paris, Napoleon was employed at the siege of Toulon.[18] He found the besieging army still under the orders of Carteaux, an absurd general, jealous of everyone and as incompetent as he was obstinate.

The arrival of Dugommier with reinforcements altered the aspect of the siege. In a letter this clever general of the Convention praised Citizen Bonaparte,[19] Artillery Major, for his conduct during the incident in which General O'Hara was taken prisoner.

[15] [The National Convention, France's legislative assembly 1792–5, sought to impose central control over the local departments.]

[16] [Supporters of devolved government and local autonomy.]

[17] [Published as *Le Souper de Beaucaire*, the pamphlet supported the Jacobins.]

[18] [The Mediterranean port of Toulon was held by royalist forces with British naval support, September–December 1793.]

[19] *Moniteur* of December 7th, 1793. [The *Moniteur* was the official newspaper of the French government. After 1799 its military bulletins were often written by Napoleon himself.] This is the first time the *Moniteur* mentions Bonaparte, whose name it prints as follows: Citizen Bona-parte. [Stendhal's notes in the Grenoble Public Library include the following, dated 27 December 1817: 'My account is a sauce made up of reading the *Moniteur*. I have had the *Moniteur* transcribed, from 1793 to 1815, the equivalent of two volumes in octavo ... This collection ... will enable all thinking people to form as complete an idea of the life of Napoleon as is possible in 1818.']

Toulon was taken and Bonaparte was promoted to the rank of major. Shortly afterwards he was showing his brother Louis the siege works, and pointed out to him a spot where a clumsy attack by Carteaux had caused losses to the Army of the Republic as great as they had been unnecessary. The earth was still ploughed up by cannon-balls. The number of freshly made earthen mounds bore witness to the number of corpses buried there. The ground was littered with the remains of hats, uniforms and weapons, which made it almost impossible to walk.

'Look, young man,' said Napoleon to his brother, 'let this be a lesson to you that for a soldier it is as much a matter of conscience as of wisdom to study one's profession seriously. If the wretch who sent those brave men in to attack had known his job,[20] a great many of them would still be alive and serving the republic. His ignorance sent them to their deaths, them and hundreds like them, in the flower of their youth and at the very moment when they were about to achieve fame and happiness.'

He said this with much feeling and almost with tears in his eyes. It is strange that a man naturally possessed of such lively feelings of humanity, could, in the years to come, have acquired the soul of a conqueror.

Bonaparte was a major, and commander of the artillery of the Army of Italy. It was with this rank that he conducted the siege of Oneglia (1794). He proposed a plan for the invasion of Italy to the commander-in-chief, General Dugommier. Fate was to reserve for him the carrying out of this plan.

He became a brigadier-general, but soon afterwards, as his manners and ability had offended all the generals of the army, they wrote to Paris and had him appointed to a command in the Vendée. Napoleon abhorred civil war, in which energy always seems inhuman. He went post-haste to Paris. There he found that not only had he been transferred from one army to another, but that he had also been transferred from the artillery to the line infantry. Aubry, president of the Military Committee, refused to listen to his protests. He was even refused permission to go out East. He remained in Paris for

[20] Perhaps: his business.

several months, unemployed and penniless. It was at this period that he became intimate with Talma, the famous actor, also at the start of his career, who gave him theatre tickets whenever he could obtain them.

Napoleon was in the depths of misfortune. He was pulled out of this state of hopeless lethargy, in itself an insult to his character, by the Director Barras,[21] who had realized his worth at the siege of Toulon. Barras put him in command of the troops which were to protect the Convention against the Paris royalists. The measures taken by the young general gave the Convention an easy victory. He sought to frighten the citizens of Paris and by doing so avoided killing them. (5 October 1795/13th Vendémiaire.)[22] This important service was rewarded by the post of general, second-in-command of the Army of the Interior.[23]

At the home of Barras, Napoleon met Madame de Beauharnais. She expressed admiration for his conduct; he fell madly in love with her. She was one of the most agreeable women in Paris; few people have possessed more charm, while Napoleon was unspoiled by success with women. He married Josephine (1796) and soon afterwards, at the beginning of spring, Barras and Carnot had him appointed commander-in-chief of the Army of Italy.

4 ITALIAN CAMPAIGN

It would take too long to follow General Bonaparte to the battlefields of Montenotte, Arcole and Rivoli. Those immortal victories should be told with all the detail which reveals to the full their miraculous quality.[24] Those victories of a young republic over an ancient despotism were a great and

[21] [Sent to oversee the siege of Toulon in 1793, Barras became one of the five Directors of the Republic in 1795.]

[22] [In fact 600 were killed by Napoleon's 'whiff of grapeshot'.]

[23] See Barras' report to the Convention in the *Moniteur.*

[24] In expectation of better things, see *Histoire de la guerre,* by General Dumas, *Histoire des campagnes d'Italie,* by General Servan, and above all the *Moniteur* and the *Annual Register.*

wonderful era for Europe. For Bonaparte it was the most unsullied and brilliant period of his life. In the course of one year, with a miserable little army which lacked everything, he chased the Austrians back from the shores of the Mediterranean to the heart of Carinthia. He scattered and wiped out the ceaselessly renewed armies which the House of Austria poured into Italy, and brought peace to the Continent. No general of ancient or modern times has won so many great battles in so short a space of time, with such inadequate means and over such powerful enemies.[25]

In the course of a single year a young man of twenty-six finds himself in the position of having surpassed an Alexander, a Caesar, a Hannibal and a Frederick the Great. And, as though to console mankind for these blood-stained successes, to the laurels of Mars he joined the olive leaves of civilization.[26] Lombardy had been debased and weakened by centuries of Catholicism and despotism[27] and was little more than a battlefield upon which the Austrians came to fight the French. General Bonaparte restored this most beautiful part of the Roman Empire to life, and in a trice appeared to have also restored its ancient virtues. He turned Lombardy into France's most devoted ally. He made it a republic, and through the institutions which his youthful hands sought to give to it, at the same time accomplished something that was of the greatest use to France and the well-being of the rest of the world.[28]

He behaved, on every occasion, like a warm and sincere friend to peace. He deserved the praise, never accorded him, of being the first outstanding figure of the French Republic to set limits

[25] See Livy, Book IX, p. 242 (trans. Dureau de La Malle, vol. IV, ed. Michaud, 1810). [In this passage Livy discusses whether Alexander the Great could have defeated the Romans. Livy concludes that he could not.]

[26] Corrected on 23 June 1818.

[27] See how in Vol. XVI of M. de Sismondi, p. 414.

[28] A bit flat, this ending.

on its aggrandizement, and sought sincerely to restore peace to the world.[29] This was doubtless a mistake. But it sprang from a heart that was too trusting and too tender towards the interests of humanity, and was the cause of his greatest mistakes. Posterity, which will clearly see the truth of this, will not wish, for the honour of the human species, to believe that envy of his contemporaries could have transformed this great man into a monster of inhumanity.[30]

The new French Republic could not survive except by surrounding itself with other republics. The indulgence which General Bonaparte displayed towards the Pope when, with Rome utterly at his mercy, he contented himself with the Treaty of Tolentino[31] and the surrender of a hundred paintings and a few statues made him many enemies in Paris. Nine years later he was forced to carry out, with great danger, what he could then have accomplished with six thousand men. The Duke of Lodi (Melzi), vice-president of the Italian Republic, a man of integrity and a genuine lover of liberty, said that Napoleon concluded the peace of Campo-Formio in direct opposition to the secret orders of the Directory.[32] It was chimerical to believe in any lasting peace between the new republic and the old European aristocracies.[33]

[29] [Napoleon concluded the peace of Campo-Formio with Austria in October 1797. Austria ceded Belgium to France, agreed to French occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and abandoned Lombardy. In return Austria received Dalmatia and part of Venetia.]

[30] See all the English books, even the most highly regarded, between 1800 and 1810 and, even less generous, the *Reflections* of Mme de Staël written after the massacres at Nîmes.

[31] [1797.]

[32] [The Directory was the supreme executive committee of five which ruled France 1795–9.]

[33] [Stendhal first wrote 'the old European dynasties'. He then altered dynasties to aristocracies, adding as a footnote: 'aristocracies, truer but less clear'.]

5 *BONAPARTE AND VENICE*

Is it worth taking the trouble to relate the objections raised by people who think they are sensitive when they are merely being weak? Such people claim that the tone used by Bonaparte when offering the Italians their freedom was that of Mahomet preaching the Koran, sword in hand. The converted were praised, protected and loaded with privileges. The infidels were pitilessly delivered up to looting, military executions and all the horrors of war. This amounts to reproaching Napoleon with having used powder to fire his guns. They hold the destruction of Venice against him. But was it really a republic that he destroyed? It was an iniquitous and debased form of government; a weakly led aristocracy, just as the other European governments are strongly led aristocracies. This likeable nation was shocked out of its habitual ways, but the next generation would have been a thousand times happier under a Kingdom of Italy. It is quite probable that the transfer of the Venetian States to the House of Austria was a secret clause in the preliminary peace negotiations at Leoben, and that the reasons subsequently alleged for making war on the republic were no more than pretexts. The French general entered into negotiations with malcontents, so as to be able to occupy the city without firing a shot. In his eyes, it was to the advantage of France to be at peace with Austria. He was the master of Venice, since it was he who had taken it. It was not his business to see that Venice was happy. One's own country first. In all this there is only one thing with which General Bonaparte may be reproached, and that is that he did not look at things from such an exalted standpoint as the Directory.[34]

[34] To see Napoleon in Italy in a true light, one should steep oneself in a volume of Livy. In that way the mind is cleansed of all the petty, false modern ideas.

6 BONAPARTE AND THE DIRECTORY

Napoleon is reproached with corrupting not the discipline, but the moral character of his army during his Italian campaign. He encouraged the most scandalous looting among his generals.[35] Forgetting the disinterestedness of the armies of the republic, they were soon as rapacious as the commissioners of the Convention. Madame Bonaparte made frequent trips to Genoa, and is said to have put five or six millions safely aside. In this matter Bonaparte behaved criminally towards France. As for Italy, even had the looting been a hundred times worse, it would not have been an excessive price to pay for the immense benefit derived from the re-birth of all the national virtues. The crimes to which a revolution gives rise is one of the arguments used by the aristocrats. They forget the crimes committed in silence before the Revolution.

The Army of Italy provided the first example of soldiers taking a hand in government. Until then the armies of the republic had been content to defeat their enemies. It is known that in 1797 a party in opposition to the Directory was formed within the Council of the Five Hundred.[36] The plans of the ringleaders may have been innocent, but their conduct certainly laid them open to suspicion. Some of them were undoubted royalists, while the majority perhaps had no other thought than to put an end to an arbitrary government and to the scandalous corruption of the Directory. The means they adopted were to withdraw the use of taxes from the government and subject its expenditure to a strict inquiry. The Directory, for its part, taking advantage of this plan of attack, spread a rumour throughout the armies that all the privations which the men were experiencing were the result of the treachery of the Legislative Body, which sought to destroy the country's defenders, so as later to be able to bring back the Bourbons with ease. In a proclamation to his troops, the

[35] The fortunes of Masséna, Augereau, etc., etc., etc. A major passed through Bologna on his way to an expedition in the Apennines. He did not even possess a horse. Two weeks later he returned the same way with seventeen loaded carts belonging to him, as well as three carriages and two mistresses. Three-quarters of the looted wealth was wasted in Italy.

[36] Memoirs of Carnot.

commander-in-chief of the Army of Italy publicly encouraged these rumours. This army dared to petition the government. It allowed itself to make reproaches, as violent as they were unconstitutional, against the majority of the Legislative Body. Bonaparte's secret intention was to follow up these addresses and to march on Paris with part of his army, under pretext of defending the Directory and the republic, but in actual fact, to arrogate to himself a leading part in the government. His plans were upset by the revolution of 18th Fructidor, which took place sooner and more easily than he had thought. (September 4th, 1797/18th Fructidor of the Year V.)[37]

This day, which completely wiped out the party in opposition to the Directory, deprived him of any pretext for crossing the Alps. He continued to speak of the Directors with the utmost contempt. The negligence, corruption and glaring blunders of the government were the habitual subject of his conversation. He usually ended by pointing out to the generals around him that, if a man could succeed in reconciling the new way of life in France with the country as a whole through a military form of government, he could easily make the republic play the part of ancient Rome.

7 *BONAPARTE'S POLITICAL IDEAS*

Although Napoleon at Elba said that he continued to be a good republican until his Egyptian expedition, several anecdotes told by Count Merveldt prove that, at the time of which we are speaking, his republicanism was already very shaky. Merveldt was one of the Austrian negotiators at Leoben and later at Campo-Formio. Since his main interest lay in provoking the downfall of the republic, he allowed it to be understood that General Bonaparte was in a position to take over the leadership of either France or Italy. The general made no reply, but did not seem at all shocked at the idea. He even spoke of the experiment of trying to govern France by means of representative bodies and republican institutions as though it were simply an experiment. Encouraged by these

[37] [The Directory summoned General Hoche to Paris to carry out a purge of royalists.]

inclinations, Merveldt, with the approval of his court, tried offering Napoleon a principality in Germany. The general replied that he was flattered by the offer, which could only arise out of the high opinion they were pleased to have of his ability and of his importance, but that it would hardly be wise, on his part, to accept it. Such an arrangement would be bound to collapse at the first Austrian war against France. If Austria found it a useless burden, and if France were to win, she would proscribe a treacherous citizen who had accepted foreign help. He added frankly that his aim was to obtain a post in the government of his country, and that if ever he could get his foot in the stirrup he did not doubt that he would go far.

8 *PORTRAIT OF BONAPARTE*

Had Napoleon not concluded the peace of Campo-Formio, he might have destroyed Austria and spared France the conquests of 1805 and 1809.[38] At this time it appears that this great man was no more than an enterprising soldier possessed of a prodigious genius, but without any fixed political principle. Fired by a thousand ambitions, he had no concrete plan for realizing his ambition.

'It was impossible', said Merveldt, 'to have ten minutes' conversation with him without realizing that he was a man of great vision and astounding ability.'[39]

'His speech, ideas and manners', said Melzi, 'were all striking and original. In conversation, as in war, he was fertile, resourceful, quick to notice and swift to attack his opponent's weakness. Gifted with an amazing rapidity of conception, he owed few of his ideas to books, and with the exception of mathematics, he knew little of the sciences. Of all his qualities,' Melzi continued, 'the most remarkable was the astounding ease with which he could concentrate his attention at will upon a given subject, keep it there for several hours in succession without relaxing his attention and as though chained to the

[38] Careful.

[39] Confused, muddled, to be re-cast.

subject until he had discovered the best thing to be done in the circumstances. His projects were vast, gigantic, conceived with genius though sometimes impracticable. They were frequently abandoned in a temper, or rendered impracticable through his own lack of patience. Naturally quick-tempered, decisive, impetuous and violent, he had the amazing gift of being able to make himself charming and, by means of cleverly expressed deference and playful flattery, win over whomever he wished. Although usually secretive and reserved, occasionally, in a fit of rage or through pride, he would reveal plans that it was in his interest to keep secret. It is probable that he never opened his heart from feelings of affection.' Moreover the only person he ever loved was Josephine, and she never betrayed him. I do not agree that he owed few of his ideas to books. He possessed few literary ideas, and it was that which misled the Duke of Lodi, a man of great literary learning who was, in consequence, somewhat weak.

The shot that kills me will bear my name, was one of Napoleon's catch-phrases. I must admit that I do not understand it. All I find in it is a preliminary tinge of that fatalism natural to men who live in daily peril from gunfire or the sea.

This very great spirit inhabited a pale, thin, almost puny body. The man's activity, and the strength with which, despite such a poor physique, he withstood fatigue, appeared to his army to be beyond the bounds of possibility. It was one of the main reasons for the incredible enthusiasm which he inspired in the rank and file.[40]

[40] [Among his notes in the Grenoble Public Library Stendhal made the following comments on the portraits of Napoleon: 'Almost all those I have seen of him are caricatures. Many painters have given him the inspired eyes of a poet. Such eyes do not go with the astounding capacity for concentration characteristic of his genius. It seems to me that such eyes are expressive of a man who has just allowed his mind to wander or of a man who has just had a sublime vision. His face was beautiful, sometimes sublime, but that was because it was calm. His eyes alone were very vivacious and alert. He smiled frequently, but never laughed. I only once saw him beside himself with joy. That was after hearing Crescentini sing the aria *Ombra adorata aspetta* ('Await, beloved shade', from Zingarelli's opera *Romeo and Juliet*, performed at the Tuileries in 1813). The least bad portraits are those by Robert Lefèvre and Chaudet. The worst are those by David and Canova.']

9 HIS RETURN TO FRANCE

Such was Bonaparte the commander-in-chief on his return to France after the conquest of Italy.[41] He was also the object of French enthusiasm, of the admiration of Europe and of the jealousy of the government he had served. He was received by this mistrustful government with every show of confidence and consideration and appointed, even before he reached Paris, one of the plenipotentiary officials to the Congress assembled at Rastadt for the purpose of making a general peace. He lost no time in getting rid of so unsuitable a role. The Directory, realizing it was at the head of a young and virile republic surrounded by enemies who, though weakened, still remained irreconcilable, was too wise to desire peace. Bonaparte also refused the command of the Army of England to which he had been appointed. The Directory was not strong enough to carry out such an undertaking successfully. Meanwhile, the young general perceived, and everyone else also realized, that there was no suitable position for him in France. Even his private life was fraught with danger; his reputation, his whole way of life was rather too romantic and too inspiring. This moment of history speaks volumes for the integrity of the Directors and shows how far we have come since the days of Marie de Medici.[42]

Often at this time and during other moments of discouragement, Bonaparte longed passionately for the calm of private life. He believed he might find happiness in the country.

10 EGYPTIAN EXPEDITION

In 1796 he had been sent a plan for the invasion of Egypt. He studied it and returned it to the Directory with his opinion. In its mortal perplexity, the Directory remembered this plan and offered him the command of the expedition. To refuse an offer of the executive authority for a third time would have led

[41] [December 1797.]

[42] [Regent of France 1610–30. A notorious intriguer.]

them to believe that some plot was being hatched in France, and would most probably have caused his downfall. Moreover, the conquest of Egypt was enough to dazzle a superior mind full of romantic plans and passionately devoted to extraordinary undertakings.

'To think that from the top of those pyramids thirty centuries gaze down on us,' Napoleon said to his army some months later.

Like all European wars, this aggression had only the slightest justification. The French were at peace with the Sultan of Turkey, who was the nominal ruler of Egypt, while the Beys, the real masters of the country, were barbarians who, knowing nothing of international law, could hardly offend against it. Besides, considerations of this kind were unlikely to have much influence on the decisions of the young general, who moreover probably considered himself to be the country's benefactor in bringing it civilization. The expedition sailed, and by a measure of good fortune which should give much food for thought, he was able to reach Alexandria, after taking Malta, without encountering Nelson.

11 EGYPTIAN EXPEDITION (CONTINUED)

One must not expect to find here an account of that series of major military engagements which placed Egypt under the rule of Bonaparte. To understand the battles of Cairo, the Pyramids and Aboukir, a description of Egypt is needed, and some idea should be given of the sublime courage of the Mamelukes. The main difficulty lay in teaching our troops to resist them.[43]

Napoleon made war in Egypt on the same principles as in Italy, but in a more despotic and oriental manner. Moreover, he was confronted by the most proud and ferocious of men, a

[43] See the description of Egypt in Volney; military history: the feeble Martin, Berthier, Denon, Wilson, at that time most worthy to be one of the admiralty writers [Robert Wilson, *History of the British Expedition to Egypt*, 1802.]

people who only lacked aristocracy to be Romans. He punished their treachery with a cruelty which he borrowed from them. The people of Cairo rose against the garrison. Not content with making an example of those caught carrying arms, he suspected their priests of being the secret instigators of the rising, and he had two hundred of them taken out and shot.[44]

Bourgeois historians gloss over such incidents with empty phrases. The semi-intelligent justify them by the cruelty and brutality of the Turks who, not content with massacring hospital patients and some prisoners they had taken, in circumstances too revolting to be described, also ruthlessly mutilated their corpses in the most savage manner.

One must seek the reason for these unfortunate but necessary measures in the principle *Salus populi suprema lex esto*.[45] A despotism beyond the reach of calumny has so debased the Orientals, that they know no other rule of obedience than fear.[46] The Cairo massacre filled them with terror, 'and since that time', Napoleon was wont to say, 'they have been much attached to me, for they saw that there was no softness in the way I governed'.

12 *JUSTIFICATION OF BONAPARTE'S CONDUCT IN EGYPT*

The mixture of Catholicism and aristocracy which has dulled our spirits for the past two hundred years blinds us to the consequences of the principle to which I have just referred. Without entering into the petty reproaches which are levelled at Napoleon on the subject of his conduct in Egypt, his greatest crimes are generally considered to have been:

[44] [October 1798.]

[45] [Let the people's safety be the supreme law.]

[46] See the Liège *Commentary* for the correction of this sentence. December 14th, 1817. [Stendhal refers to the *Commentary on* [Montesquieu's] *'On the Spirit of the Laws'* by Destutt de Tracy, Liège, 1817.]

1 The killing of his prisoners at Jaffa.

2 The poisoning of his sick at Acre.[47]

3 His alleged conversion to Mohammedanism.

4 His desertion of the army.

Napoleon gave the following account of the Jaffa incident to Lord Ebrington, one of the most enlightened and reliable of the travellers whom he saw at Elba:

> As for the Turks at Jaffa, it is true that I had about two thousand of them shot.[48] You feel that that was going too far. But I had let them surrender at El Arish on condition that they returned to Baghdad. They violated the terms of this capitulation and rushed into Jaffa where I then took them by storm. I was unable to take them with me as prisoners, because I was short of bread, and they were devils too dangerous to be released in the desert a second time. So there was nothing else I could do but kill them.

It is true that, according to the rules of war, a prisoner who has once broken his parole has no further right to mercy.[49] But this appalling right of a conqueror has seldom been exercised and never, it seems to me, in modern times on so great a number of men at once. If, in the heat of the attack, the French had refused to give any quarter, no one would have blamed them, since the men killed had broken their parole. If the victorious general had realized that a large number of the garrison consisted of prisoners sent back to El Arish on parole, he would most probably have given orders for them to be put to the sword. I do not think there is another example in history of a garrison, spared at the time of assault, being subsequently put to death. But that is not all. It is probable that not more than a third of the Jaffa garrison consisted of prisoners from El Arish.[50]

In order to save his army, has a general the right to put his prisoners to death, or to place them in a position which must

47 [This incident in fact took place at Jaffa.]

48 See Las Cases.

49 Martens, *Law of Nations*, p. 291.

50 Las Cases.

inevitably cause their death or hand them over to savages from whom they can expect no quarter? With the Romans there would have been no question about it.[51] Furthermore, on the answer to this question depends not only the justification of Napoleon at Jaffa, but of Henry V at Agincourt, Lord Anson in the South Sea Islands and the Bailli de Suffren on the coast of Coromandel.[52] One thing is certain, and that is that the necessity must be obvious and urgent, and it cannot be denied that the Jaffa incident was a case of necessity. It would not have been wise to send back the prisoners on parole. Experience had shown that these barbarians would have had no scruples about ensconcing themselves in the first fortified town they encountered; or that, attaching themselves to the army as it advanced into Palestine, they would constantly have harried its flanks and rear-guard.[53]

The commander-in-chief should not alone be held responsible for this appalling act. The decision was taken at a council of war at which Berthier, Kléber, Lannes, Bon, Caffarelli and several other generals were present.[54]

13 JUSTIFICATION OF BONAPARTE'S CONDUCT IN EGYPT (CONTINUED)[55]

Napoleon has himself told several people that he intended having opium administered as a poison to some of the sick of his army. It is obvious to anyone who knew him that this idea was the result of an error of judgement, and was not at all due

[51] See Livy, who rightly blames the Samnites for not having wiped out the Romans at the Caudine Forks. Book IX, p. 221, 4th volume of La Malle's translation.

[52] [All three put prisoners to death: Henry V at Agincourt in 1415. Lord Anson and the Bailli de Suffren were eighteenth-century navigators, English and French respectively.]

[53] *Edinburgh Review* [No. 54], pp. 476 and 477.

[54] Too many arguments in favour of something that can be justified in a few words. [Note by Vismara.]

[55] Corrected on 9 January 1818 for the second time and on ... June 1818.

to callousness, still less to indifference to the fate of his soldiers. All accounts[56] agree as to the care he took of the sick and wounded during his Syrian campaign. He did what no general had ever done before: he visited in person the hospitals for the plague-stricken. He talked to the patients, listened to their complaints and saw for himself that the surgeons were carrying out their duties.[57]

Every time his army moved, and especially during the retreat from Acre, his greatest care was for his hospital. The wisdom of the measures taken to transport the sick and wounded and the care given them won him the praise of the English. M. Desgenettes, who was chief medical officer to the Army of Syria, is nowadays a pronounced royalist, but even since the return of the Bourbons he has never spoken of Napoleon's conduct towards his sick except in terms of the highest praise.

The celebrated Assalini, a doctor at Munich, was also in Syria at the time, and although he disliked Napoleon, he speaks of him as does Desgenettes. At the time of the retreat from Acre, Assalini, having made a report to the commander-in-chief from which it transpired that the means of transport for the sick were inadequate, received instructions to go out on the roads and to stop all the baggage horses, and even to take the officers' horses. This drastic measure was fully carried out, and not one of the sick was left behind who in the opinion of the doctors stood the slightest chance of recovery. At Elba, the emperor, who felt that the English nation counted among its citizens the sanest minds in Europe, invited Lord Ebrington on several occasions to question him frankly on incidents in his life.[58] As a result, when Lord Ebrington came to the rumours of poisoning, Napoleon replied immediately and without the slightest hesitation:

> There is a basis of truth in it. Several soldiers had the plague. They could not have lived twenty-four hours. I was on the point of leaving. I consulted Desgenettes as to

[56] Even the slanderous account by General Robert Wilson [*History of the British Expedition to Egypt*, 1802.]

[57] He tried to persuade M. Desgenettes to maintain in public that the plague was not contagious. The vanity of the latter caused him to refuse.

[58] Corrected for the second time on 9 January 1818.

the means of taking them with us. He replied that we would run the risk of infecting the whole army with the plague, and that moreover such care would be wasted on the patients, as they could not recover. I told him to give them a dose of opium, since that would be better than leaving them to the mercy of the Turks.[59] As a man of honour he replied that it was his business to cure and not to kill. Perhaps he was right, although I only asked him to do for them what I would have asked my best friends to do for me under similar circumstances. I have often pondered the ethics of this since, and I have asked several people for their opinion. *I believe that fundamentally it is always better to let a man fulfil his destiny, whatever it may be.* I came to this conclusion later, at the death of my poor friend Duroc[60] who, with his guts spilling on the ground before my eyes, begged me several times and even pleaded that I should put an end to his sufferings. I told him: 'I pity you, my friend, but there is nothing to be done; you must endure to the end.'

As for Napoleon's apostasy in Egypt, he began all his proclamations with the words: *'Allah is Allah and Mohammed is his prophet.'* This alleged crime created hardly any effect except in England. Other nations realized that it should be put in the same category as the Mohammedanism of Major Horneman[61] and the other travellers whom the Africa Society employs to discover the secrets of the desert. Napoleon wished to conciliate the Egyptians.[62] He was right in hoping that a large section of this congenitally superstitious people would be struck with terror at his religious and prophetic sentences and that they would even surround his person with an aura of irresistible fatalism. The idea that he seriously desired to be taken for a second Mohammed is worthy of an émigré.[63] His conduct met with the most unqualified success.

'You can have no idea', he told Lord Ebrington, 'of what I gained in Egypt through pretending to adopt their religion.'

[59] See Las Cases.

[60] [General Duroc, who was mortally wounded in Silesia in 1813.]

[61] [German explorer and author of *Journal of Travels from Cairo to Mourzouk in the Years 1797–8*, 1802.]

[62] See the article by Las Cases.

[63] See their books.

The English, always dominated by their Puritan prejudices which nevertheless go hand-in-glove with the most revolting cruelties, thought that this was a low trick. History will show that towards the time of Napoleon's birth Catholic ideas were already subject to ridicule.

14 RETURN TO FRANCE

As for the much more serious act of abandoning his army in Egypt, that was primarily a crime against the government, which the government could legitimately punish. But it was not a crime against his army, which he left in a flourishing condition, as is proved by the way in which it withstood the English. The only thing he may be reproached with is the blunder of not having foreseen that Kléber might be killed, which subsequently left the army to the ineptitude of General Menou.

We shall know in time whether, as I believe, Napoleon was recalled to France on the advice of several clever patriots, or whether he determined upon this decisive step solely as a result of his own reflections.[64] Men of goodwill take pleasure in considering what must have been going through his mind at the time. On the one hand, there was ambition and love of country, the hope of leaving a great name to posterity; on the other, there was the possibility of being captured by the English or of being shot.[65] What firmness of judgement to take such a decisive course based solely upon conjecture! This man's whole life is a paean in praise of greatness of soul.

[64] This is a very interesting question that one should try to clarify in a work such as this. [Note by Vismara.] Nothing can be done before the publication of the memoirs of Lucien, Sieyès and Barras. [Note by Stendhal.]

[65] Something should be said of the way in which he left the army and of his departure, which was an event bordering on the grandiose. [Note by Vismara.] Yes, I will do so. [Note by Stendhal.]

15 RECEPTION IN FRANCE

When Napoleon heard of the disasters to the armies, the loss of Italy, and the anarchy and discontent inside the country, he concluded from this sorry picture that the Directory could no longer survive. He returned to Paris so as to save France and to make certain of a place for himself in the new government. By returning from Egypt he served both the country and himself, which is all that can be asked of mere mortals.[66]

To be sure, after he had landed, Napoleon had no idea of how he would be treated. Until his enthusiastic reception at Lyons, it looked doubtful whether his daring would be rewarded by a throne or by the scaffold. At the first news of his return, the Directory instructed Fouché, then minister of police, to arrest him. This famous traitor replied: 'He is not the man to let himself be arrested; nor am I the man to arrest him.'[67]

16 BONAPARTE'S IDEAS ON THE EVE OF THE 18TH BRUMAIRE[68]

While General Bonaparte was hastening back from Egypt to the aid of the country, the Director Barras, an excellent man for an underhand deal, was engaged in selling France to the exiled royal family for the sum of twelve million francs. With this aim in view, letters patent had already been sent.[69] Barras had been pursuing the matter for two years, and Sieyès had

[66] Details of the sea-trip.

[67] Every day new [blank in the text] were to be found at the gates of the Luxembourg [palace]. For instance, one day a large poster was to be seen representing a lancet, a lettuce and a rat. This was a play on the words *lancette, laitue, rat*. (*L'an sept les tuera*: The Year VII [1799] will kill them.)

[68] Added on 22 December 1816 [*Sic*. Stendhal means 1817.].

[69] [That is, a title of nobility had been granted to Barras.]

discovered the plot while ambassador at Berlin.[70] This example, and that of Mirabeau,[71] clearly show that a republic should never entrust itself to men of noble birth. Having always been susceptible to the charm of aristocratic titles, Barras dared to confide his plans to his former protégé.

Napoleon had found his brother Lucien in Paris, and together they discussed the following possibilities. It was obvious that either he or the Bourbons were going to ascend the throne, or else the republic would have to be remodelled.

The plan to restore the Bourbons was absurd. The people still loathed the nobility and, despite the crimes of the Terror, they were still devoted to the republic. The Bourbons would need a foreign army inside Paris. As for remodelling the republic, that is, providing a constitution that would endure, Napoleon did not feel that he had the means to resolve this problem. He had found the available men too despicable and bent on their own selfish interests. Finally, he could see no assured position for himself, and if there should happen to be another traitor ready to sell France to the Bourbons or to England, the first measure to be taken would be to secure Napoleon's death. As was only natural in this state of uncertainty, ambition carried the day and in self-justification Napoleon told himself: 'I am better for France than the Bourbons.' As for the constitutional monarchy desired by Sieyès, he had no means of establishing it, and also the king he proposed[72] was then too little known. An energetic and immediate remedy was needed.[73]

Unfortunate France, internally in chaos, witnessed the collapse of all her armies, one after the other. Her enemies were kings whose duty it was to show her no mercy, since the republic, by showing their subjects the way to happiness, imperilled their own thrones. If, after defeating France, these exasperated

[70] Barras' intermediaries were David, Mounier, Tropès de Guérin, the Duke de Fleury. See the *Biographie Moderne* by Michaud for an invaluable effusion on the subject as a result of such admissions. The *Moniteur* paints a good picture of the chaos and degradation.

[71] [Count de Mirabeau, reforming minister under Louis XVI 1789–91.]

[72] [Louis-Philippe, Duke of Orleans, a younger branch of the Bourbon dynasty, later King Louis-Philippe (1830–48).]

[73] 25 June 1818.

kings had condescended to restore the country to the exiled royal family, what that family was later to do or to permit in 1815[74] still gives only a feeble idea of what might have been expected of it in 1800.[75] Sunk in the utmost depth of depression and moral degradation, unfortunate in the government she herself had so proudly chosen, still more unfortunate in the rout of her armies, France would not have inspired the Bourbons with any fear. And fear on the part of the monarch is the only thing that can account for the liberal aspects of the government.

It is more likely, however, that the victorious kings would have divided France among themselves. It would have been prudent to destroy such a hot-bed of Jacobinism. The Duke of Brunswick's manifesto would have been carried out[76] and all those noble writers who adorn the Academies would have proclaimed liberty to be an impossibility. Since 1793, modern ideas had never been in greater peril. World civilization was about to be thrust back several centuries. The unhappy Peruvian would still be groaning under the iron yoke of the Spaniard,[77] and the victorious kings would have given themselves to the refinements of cruelty, as at Naples.[78]

74 The mission of the Marquis de Rivière to the South. The Nîmes massacres. The Trestaillon incident. [Episodes of the Bourbon 'White Terror' in 1815 after Waterloo. The Marquis de Rivière was sent to arrest Napoleon's Marshal Brune at Toulon. At Avignon, on his way to Paris, Brune was murdered by the Trestaillons, a Catholic royalist gang who terrorized local Protestants.]

75 Careful. Credit the émigrés with what they did in 1815.

76 [The Duke of Brunswick commanded the Prussian and Austrian armies in 1792. His manifesto threatened retaliation on Paris should any harm befall the royal family.]

77 [Peru's struggle for independence, achieved in 1821 under Simón Bolívar and José San Martín, was close to success.]

78 Careful. Delete this sentence. [The Kingdom of Naples became a byword for oppression after the restoration of its Bourbon King Ferdinand I in 1815.]

On all sides, therefore, France was about to vanish into the bottomless pit in which, in our time, we have seen Poland engulfed.[79] If ever circumstances existed when the eternal right of all mankind to unrestricted freedom could be laid down, it was then that General Bonaparte was in a position to say to every Frenchman: 'Through me you are still French. Through me you are not subject to a Prussian judge or a Piedmontese governor. Through me you are not the slave of some irate master, out to avenge his own fear. Suffer me then to be your emperor.'

Such were the principal ideas which animated General Bonaparte and his brother on the eve of the 18th Brumaire (9 November 1799). Everything else related merely to the means of carrying them out.[80]

17 *SIEYÈS*

While Napoleon was deciding upon his course of action and the steps to be taken, he was also being courted by the different factions which rent the dying republic. The government was about to fall because of the lack of a conservative Senate to keep the balance between the Chamber of Commons and the Directory and appoint the members of the Directory; and not because a republic is impossible in France. In the present case, a dictator was essential, but the legitimately established government would never have brought itself to nominate one. The sordid spirits who had grown to maturity under an ancient monarchy, and who now constituted the Directory, were only aware, in the midst of their country's misfortunes, of their own petty egoisms and private interests. Anything in the least magnanimous seemed to them no more than a fraud.

79 [Partitioned between Prussia, Russia and Austria between 1772 and 1795, Poland was resurrected by Napoleon as a French satellite 1807–13, and redistributed among the same states by the Congress of Vienna in 1815.]

80 It seems to me more likely that the two brothers discussed the forces at their disposal, the sources of opposition in and outside Paris, the power and intrigues of the various factions, and the effect of the latest revolution in the republic. [Note by Vismara.]

The wise and good Sieyès had always held to the great principle that to guarantee the institutions gained by the Revolution, what was needed was a dynasty called into being by the Revolution. He helped Bonaparte to bring about the 18th Brumaire. Failing him, he would have done so with some other general. Sieyès has since said: 'I brought about the 18th Brumaire, but not the 19th.' It is said that General Moreau refused to support Sieyès, and General Joubert, who had aspired to that role, was killed at the beginning of his first battle, at Novi.

Sieyès and Barras were the two leading men in the government. Barras was busy selling the republic to a Bourbon without worrying about the consequences, and asked General Bonaparte to lead the movement. Sieyès wished to create a constitutional monarchy. The first article in his constitution would have nominated a Duke of Orleans as king, and he asked General Bonaparte to lead the movement. The general, who was necessary to both parties, approached Lefèvre, a general better known for his daring than for his intelligence, and who at the time was in command of Paris and of the 17th Division.[81] Bonaparte acted in concert with Barras and Sieyès, but he had soon won General Lefèvre to himself. From that moment Bonaparte controlled the troops occupying Paris and the surrounding district; and the only remaining question was what shape the Revolution was to assume.

18 THE 18TH BRUMAIRE

During the night of the 18th Brumaire (9 November 1799) Bonaparte suddenly called together by means of personal letters those members of the Council of Ancients[82] on whom he could count. Advantage was taken of the article in the

[81] Careful. [Marshal Lefèvre, Duke of Danzig, voted for Napoleon's abdication in 1814 and was made a peer by the Bourbons, but rejoined Napoleon during the Hundred Days and was currently in disgrace.]

[82] [The Five Hundred and the *Anciens* or Ancients were respectively the lower and upper house of the Legislative Body under the Directory, 1795–9.]

constitution which enabled the Council to transfer the Legislative Body outside Paris. The Council passed a decree which, on the following day, 19th Brumaire, gave notice of a meeting of the Legislative Body at Saint-Cloud. It engaged General Bonaparte to take all precautions necessary for the safety of the national representatives and placed the troops of the Line and the National Guards under his orders. Called to the bar to hear this decree, Bonaparte made a speech. As he could not refer to the two conspiracies he was about to frustrate, his speech consisted only of empty phrases. On the 19th the Directory, the generals and a crowd of sightseers went to Saint-Cloud. Soldiers lined all the streets. The Council of Ancients assembled in the gallery. The Council of the Five Hundred, of which Lucien Bonaparte had just been made president, met in the Orangerie.

Bonaparte entered the chamber of the Ancients and spoke amidst the interruptions and cries of deputies devoted to the constitution, or rather, of deputies who refused to let a movement succeed to which they were not a party. During these critical moments, an even more stormy scene was taking place in the Council of the Five Hundred. Several members demanded that the motives which had determined the removal of the councils to Saint-Cloud should be examined. Lucien made fruitless attempts to calm those who had been roused by this proposal, and when the French reach such a pitch, self-interest falls silent, or rather, there remains no other course than to become a hero out of vanity. The general cry was: 'No dictator! Down with the dictator!'

At that moment General Bonaparte entered the chamber, escorted by four grenadiers. A crowd of deputies cried: 'What is the meaning of this? No swords in here! No armed men!' Others, better judges of events, rushed into the middle of the chamber, surrounded the general, and seizing hold of him, roughly shook him and cried: 'Outlaw! Down with the dictator!' As bravery in legislative chambers is a very rare thing in France, history would do well to remember the name of Deputy Bigonnet of Mâcon. This brave deputy should have killed Bonaparte.[83]

83 [Bigonnet ordered Napoleon to leave the council chamber.]

The rest of the account is less reliable. It is alleged that on hearing the terrible cry of 'outlaw!' Bonaparte grew pale and could not find a single word to say in self-defence.[84] General Lefèvre came to his assistance and helped him to get away. It is also said that Bonaparte jumped on a horse and, believing the coup at Saint-Cloud to have failed, galloped off towards Paris. He had actually reached the bridge when Murat[85] succeeded in catching up with him and said to him: 'He who leaves a fight, loses it.' Restored to his senses by this advice, Napoleon returned to the rue de Saint-Cloud, called the soldiers to arms and sent a picket of grenadiers into the council-chamber at the Orangerie. These grenadiers, led by Murat, entered the chamber. Lucien, who had held out in the tribune, returned to the chair and declared that those representatives who had wished to assassinate his brother were audacious bandits in the pay of England. He had a decree passed suppressing the Directory and placing executive power in the hands of three provisional consuls: Bonaparte, Sieyès and Roger-Ducos. A legislative commission, to be selected from both councils, was to join the three consuls for the purpose of drawing up a constitution.

Until the publication of the *Memoirs* of Lucien,[86] details of the 18th Brumaire will not be very clear. Meanwhile, the honours of this great revolution go to the president of the Council of the Five Hundred, who displayed in the tribune a dauntless courage at a time when his brother had weakened. He greatly influenced the constitution that was hastily being drafted. This constitution, which was not at all bad, appointed three consuls: Bonaparte, Cambacérès and Lebrun.

[84] I believe it to be the duty of the historian of his own times to write only of known facts and not of doubts or of hearsay. This incident should be clarified or else cut. [Note by Vismara.] No. [Note by Stendhal.]

[85] [General (later Marshal) Joachim Murat, who married Napoleon's sister Caroline in 1800.]

[86] These *Memoirs* are with Colburn at London. They may be published at any moment, as well as those of Carnot and of Tallien. [The memoirs of Lucien Bonaparte were published in 1818. Carnot (whose memoirs were published in 1824) and Tallien participated in the *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire.]

A Senate was formed, composed of people who could lay claim to no position. This Senate appointed the Legislative Body. The Legislative Body could only vote laws but could not debate them. This was reserved for another body known as the Tribunat, which debated laws but could not vote them.

Both the Tribunat and the executive power sent their draft laws to be defended before the silent Legislative Body.

This constitution might have worked quite well had the fortunes of France willed that the first consul be removed by a cannon-ball after a reign of two years. The country would then have seen enough of monarchy[87] to be completely disgusted with it. It is easy to see that the fault of the Constitution of the Year VIII lay in the fact that the Legislative Body was appointed by the Senate. It should have been elected directly by the people, and the Senate charged with appointing a new consul every year.

19 STATE OF FRANCE ON THE 18TH BRUMAIRE

Government by a dozen cowardly and treacherous thieves was replaced by a military despotism. But without this military despotism, France would have had, in 1800, the events of 1814[88] or else the Terror.

Napoleon now had his foot in the stirrup, as he had remarked during his Italian campaigns. And it must be agreed that never has a general or a monarch had so brilliant a year as was, both for him and for France, the last year of the eighteenth century.

When he assumed supreme power, the First Consul found the armies of France defeated and disorganized. His Italian conquests were reduced to the mountains and coast of Genoa. He had just lost the greater part of Switzerland. The greed and

87 [Stendhal means Napoleon's dictatorial rule.]

88 [The so-called 'White Terror' or Bourbon reaction.]

injustice of the republican agents[89] had shocked the Swiss. From then on the aristocracy gained the upper hand in that country, and France had no more inveterate enemy. Their neutrality was now but a name, and the most vulnerable French frontier was completely unprotected.

All French resources were completely exhausted and, worst of all, the enthusiasm of the French was dead. All attempts to establish a free constitution had failed.[90] The Jacobins were despised and hated for their cruelty, and for the folly of having sought to establish a republic modelled on those of antiquity. The moderates were despised for their incapacity and corruption. The royalists, who were very active in western France, as usual proved themselves in Paris to be timid, intriguers and above all cowards.[91]

With the exception of Moreau,[92] nobody who had returned from Egypt, other than the General, possessed both popularity and a reputation. And Moreau at that time wished to go with the crowd, which at all times he was incapable of leading.

20 *BONAPARTE'S DICTATORSHIP*

Washington himself would have found it difficult to judge the amount of liberty that could safely be granted to a supremely childish people, for whom experience meant nothing and who at heart still cherished all the stupid prejudices to which an ancient monarchy gives rise. But none of the ideas which would have preoccupied Washington held the attention of the

[89] Quite by chance the most knavish of these rascals was called Rapinat.

[90] Very good. [Note by Vismara.]

[91] Careful. They were above all unenterprising. *For me* [in English in the text] their finest characteristic. The Lyons conspiracy of 1817. [The Bourbon authorities responded to this plot in favour of Napoleon's son by guillotining the ringleaders.]

[92] [Moreau was an ambitious general who later opposed Napoleon.]

First Consul, or at least he considered them too facile and visionary for Europe in the year 1800.

General Bonaparte was exceedingly ignorant of the art of government.[93] Bred on military ideas, to him discussion always seemed like insubordination. Experience proved to him daily his immense personal superiority, and he despised men too much to let them discuss measures which he had deemed salutary. Imbued with Roman ideas, the greatest misfortune, in his eyes, was always to be conquered rather than to be badly governed and pestered in one's own home.

Even if he had possessed a more understanding mind, even if he had understood the invincible power which government by public opinion confers, I have no doubt that the man would have carried the day, and that in the long run the despot would have appeared. It is not given to one human being to have all the talents at once, and he was too superb a general to be any good as a politician and legislator.

During the first months of his consulate,[94] he exercised a veritable dictatorship which events rendered indispensable. Hounded internally by the Jacobins and the royalists, and by the memory of the recent conspiracies of Barras and of Sieyès, harassed externally by the armies of the kings, ever ready to swarm across the territory of the republic, the primary law for him was to survive. In my eyes this law justifies all the arbitrary measures which he took during the first year of his consulate.

Gradually, as their conception of him was borne out by experience, people came to believe that his opinions were entirely original. At once a horde of sycophants surrounded him. As usual they went around mouthing all the opinions

93 Very true: this is what refutes all the praises accorded to Bonaparte as a statesman in Italy. [Note by Vismara.] True. [Note by Stendhal.]

94 Excellent chapter, written in the manner of Hume. [Note by Vismara.]

attributed to the master.[95] Men of the type of Regnault and Maret[96] were assisted by a nation used to slavery and which only feels at ease when being led.

It was not Napoleon's aim to give the French people at first as much freedom as they could stand, and then gradually to increase this freedom proportionately as the factious parties cooled down and public opinion grew calmer and more enlightened. He did not consider how much authority could safely be entrusted to the people; he sought to discover with how little power they would be content. The constitution which he gave to France was calculated, if indeed it was calculated, gradually to bring a fine country back to an absolute monarchy, and not to complete the fashioning of it along lines of freedom.[97] Napoleon saw a crown before his eyes and let himself be dazzled by the splendour of that out-of-date bauble. He might have established the republic[98] or at least set up a government by two chambers. But his sole ambition was to found a dynasty of kings.

21 *REORGANIZATION OF FRANCE*

The first measures taken by the dictator were noble, wise and beneficial. Everyone accepted the need for a strong government; so a strong government there was. Everyone

95 Carrion-Nisas in 1801, or Ferrand in 1815. [As a member of the Tribunat, the Marquis de Carrion de Nisas gave obsequious approval to Napoleon's Concordat with the Pope in 1801. Ferrand was among those who called for the restoration of the Bourbons in 1815. Louis XVIII made him a minister of state, a count and a peer.] Good but imprudent.

96 [Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély became a councillor of state, and Maret head of Napoleon's personal office, in 1799.]

97 *For me* [in English in the text] the consul's actions are as much a part of European history as of French history ... are not French history but European history.

98 Five directors to be renewed every five years and nominated by a conservative Senate. Two chambers directly elected by the people, the first from among those paying 1,000 francs in taxes; the second from among those paying 10,000, to be renewed every five years. Such a government is a sure guarantee against conquest.

protested at the corruption and lack of equity of recent governments: the First Consul put a stop to petty thieving and lent a strong arm to the administration of justice. Everyone deplored the existence of parties which divided and weakened France: Napoleon placed men of ability from all parties at the head of affairs. Everyone feared a reaction: with a firm hand Napoleon suppressed every attempt at reaction. His government gave equal protection to all who obeyed the laws, and ruthlessly punished all who sought to infringe them. Persecution had revived the last sparks of Catholicism: Napoleon took religious worship under his protection and restored the priests to their altars. The western departments were ravaged by civil war, which the law of hostages[99] had caused to flare up again: Napoleon abolished the law of hostages, closed the lists of émigrés and, by a judicious mixture of mildness and severity, restored complete calm to the west.

The whole of France was united in the desire for peace: Napoleon offered to make peace with his enemies. After his offer was disdainfully rejected by England and Austria, he subdued the latter power by means of the admirable Marengo campaign, and then pardoned her with insane generosity.[100] The English Cabinet, that poisonous oligarchy, which employs the strength and knowledge it owes to freedom to increase the misfortunes of the world and to rivet the fetters of the enslaved;[101] the English Cabinet, the most formidable and enlightened of all the first consul's enemies, deserted by all its allies, was ultimately obliged to make peace and to recognize the republic.[102]

[99] [Under the law of hostages, 1799, relatives of émigrés or known counter-revolutionaries could be held personally liable for crimes committed in named trouble-spots, and could be fined and deported.]

[100] [By the Treaty of Lunéville, 1801, Napoleon required Austria merely to confirm the Treaty of Campo-Formio, 1797.]

[101] Tedious. Detracts from the main subject. To be inserted elsewhere as well as the English aristocracy's fear of the freedom which exists across the Channel. The English, after having feared our armed forces under Napoleon, are now afraid of our freedom.

[102] [By the Treaty of Amiens, March 1802.]

22 *THE CONCORDAT; THE CODE*[103]

Napoleon now had no further rivals among the great men of modern times. He had reached the pinnacle of fame, and had he wished to give freedom to his country, he would no longer have encountered any obstacles.

Above all he was praised for having restored peace to the Church by means of his Concordat.[104] This was a great mistake, which will delay by a century the emancipation of France. He should have been satisfied with putting an end to all persecution.[105] Private individuals should pay their priest, as they pay their baker.

He always observed the greatest tolerance towards the French Protestants. In his time, any man who spoke of the possible violation of this elementary right of man[106] would have been thought mad. Putting his finger on the sore which prevents the recovery of Catholicism, he asked the Pope to authorize the marriage of priests, but he met with little understanding at

[103] *Note of a great man. I would have added some observations and anecdotes, here and there, but the departure has robbed me of the opportunity.* [In English in the text. Stendhal probably refers to his trip to France in late 1817.]

[104] [Under the Concordat with Pope Pius VII, published 1802, Napoleon recognized Roman Catholicism as the dominant religion in France, appointed bishops and closely regulated the Church in France.]

[105] On the contrary, once he had taken up a position on the side of monarchy, Napoleon, who had no new political ideas, was bound to surround himself with religion, to lend it distinction, etc. ... [Note by Vismara.] He did not need the Concordat to be able to reign over a nation that was extremely indifferent to religion, and the only serious obstacle he encountered was the Pope at Savona. If he had not made the Concordat, the Pope would always have been at his feet. This was admirably expressed to Napoleon by the third consul, Lebrun. [Note by Stendhal. Differences with Pius VII led Napoleon to occupy the Papal States in 1809. When Pius excommunicated him, Napoleon imprisoned him at Savona.]

[106] [Under article 10 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, 1789, 'No man must be penalized for his opinions, even his religious opinions'.]

the court of Rome. As he told Fox,[107] had he insisted on pursuing this objective, *they would have cried that it was pure Protestantism*.

He introduced greater fairness and rapidity into the administration of justice. He was busy on his finest work, the Code Napoléon. Thus, by an example unique in history, it is to her greatest military leader that France owes the ending of the confusion and contradictions in the labyrinth of laws by which she was governed.[108] Finally crime disappeared, thanks to the appearance of the policemen whom he had chosen from among his finest soldiers.

23 *CONSTITUTION OF THE YEAR VIII; FOREIGN POLICY*

But on turning from his administration to his institutions, the picture changes. In the former, all is light, happiness and sincerity, while in the latter all is uncertainty, pettiness and hypocrisy.

His political mistakes may be summed up in a few words: he always feared the masses and he never had a plan.[109] Nevertheless, guided unwittingly by the natural soundness of his mind and the respect which he always felt for the Constituent Assembly,[110] the institutions which he founded were always liberal. To be sure, a silent Legislative Body, a Tribunat that can speak but not vote, a Senate that debates in secret, are absurd, because a government cannot represent only one-half of public opinion. 'But', we told ourselves, 'it

107 [Charles James Fox, leading Whig politician, who met Napoleon in Paris, 1802.]

108 The only example in history. [Note by Vismara.]

109 [In the *Mémorial de Sainte Hélène,* Napoleon claimed that he was ruled by circumstances and had no firm plans.]

110 [The Constituent Assembly (1789–91) drafted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) and the constitution of 1791.]

takes a Romulus to found states, and then a Numa will follow.'[111] After his death it would be an easy matter to perfect these institutions and make them bring forth liberty. Furthermore, for the French, they had the immense advantage of making them forget everything old. Frenchmen need to be cured of their respect for outworn ideas. Had Napoleon been better advised, he would have restored the *parlements*.[112] Amid so many miracles that were the products of his genius, the first consul saw only an empty throne; and in fairness to him it must be said that neither his military habits nor his temperament were suited to the restrictions imposed by a limited authority.

The press, which had dared, inconveniently, to bring things to light, was persecuted and subdued.[113] People who incurred his displeasure were threatened, arrested and banished without trial. Personal freedom had no refuge against the arbitrary orders of his minister of police, other than the extent of his genius, which made him realize that every useless vexation diminished the strength of the nation, and therefore that of its ruler. So great was the power of this controlling influence that, although he reigned over forty million subjects, after governments which had, as it were, encouraged every crime, the state prisons were less full than under good King Louis XVI.[114] There was a tyrant, but little despotism. Nevertheless, civilization's real cry is: 'No despotism!'

He acted from day to day according to his moods, which were terrible, against the political bodies, because these alone induced fear in that intrepid mind. One fine day, after the Tribunat had dared to argue quite rightly against the draft laws prepared by his ministers, he removed from that body

[111] [Romulus was the legendary founder of Rome, Numa its first lawgiver.]

[112] [Abolished in 1789, the dozen *parlements* were local law courts with authority to register, and to veto, royal edicts.]

[113] [In 1800 Napoleon reduced the number of Paris daily newspapers from 73 to 13, and by 1811 to 4. All authorized newspapers were government mouthpieces.]

[114] [In 1810 Napoleon established eight state prisons to detain opponents of the regime without trial. In 1814 there were reckoned to be 640 inmates, of whom one half were political prisoners.]

anyone who was worth something, and shortly afterwards suppressed it entirely.[115] The Senate, far from being conservative, experienced constant changes and was repeatedly debased, because Bonaparte did not want any institution to take root in public opinion. It was necessary for an extremely discriminating people to sense, in the words *stability* and *posterity*, that there was nothing stable except his power, nothing progressive except his authority. 'The French', he remarked at about this time, 'are indifferent to liberty. They neither understand it nor like it. Vanity is their ruling passion; and political equality, which enables them all to feel that any position is open to them, is the only political right they care about.'

Never has anything truer been said about the French people.[116]

Under the emperor, theory made the French invoke Liberty more often than they really felt the need of it. That is why the suppression of the freedom of the press was so well calculated. The nation showed itself perfectly indifferent when the First Consul deprived it of freedom of the press and individual liberty. Today France suffers profoundly from their absence. To be fair, she may not feel the events of the past with the sensitivity she feels today. Then the bringing of the sword of Frederick (the victor of Rossbach) to the Invalides,[117] consoled her for the loss of a privilege.

Tyrannical measures were very often exercised in the common interest: for instance, in the merging of political parties, the stabilization of the finances, the establishment of the codes of law, and the work of the public highways department. It is possible, on the other hand, to imagine a government which causes little inconvenience to the individual because it is

115 [In 1802 Napoleon purged the Tribunat of 20 of its 100 members. He abolished it in 1807.]

116 *For me* [in English in the text] what proves the stupidity of the Bourbons is that, though they seek absolute power, they have not followed this route.

117 [After defeating Prussia at Jena in 1806, Napoleon removed the sword of Frederick the Great (victor over the French at Rossbach, 1757) to the Invalides in Paris.]

weak, yet which employs its small amount of strength to the detriment of the common good.

The First Consul was quite convinced that vanity was a national characteristic in France. To satisfy both this universal passion and his own ambition, he took care to aggrandize France and to increase its influence in Europe. When one morning the Parisian read in his *Moniteur* a decree beginning: *Holland has been reunited with the empire,*[118] he admired the might of France, saw Napoleon as far superior to Louis XIV, gloried in obeying such a master, forgot that only the day before he had been irritated by conscription or indirect taxation – and thought of applying for a post in Holland for his son.

At the time of which we are speaking,[119] Piedmont, the states of Parma and the island of Elba successively were annexed to the republic. These partial reunions were matter for conversation. When Melzi[120] put before Napoleon his fears on the subject of the reunion of Piedmont, the first consul replied with a smile: 'This is a strong arm; it only asks for loads to carry.'[121] Spain ceded Louisiana to him.[122] He recovered possession of Santo-Domingo by means which are not clearly known, but which appear to be worthy of the treachery and cruelty of Philip II.[123] He assembled at Lyons all the outstanding figures of the Cisalpine Republic, the one fine creation of his political genius. He deprived them of their

[118] [1810.]

[119] [1801–2.]

[120] [Melzi assisted Napoleon in the creation of the Italian Republic (formerly the Cisalpine Republic, in central-north Italy), becoming its vice-president when Napoleon made himself its president in 1802.]

[121] Tie up all these ideas and tell us if he was a good statesman. [Note by Vismara.]

[122] [Napoleon acquired Louisiana from Spain in 1800 and sold it to the United States of America in 1804.]

[123] [In 1801 Napoleon sent a French force to recover Santo-Domingo (Haiti), then controlled by its revolutionary black leader, Toussaint de L'Ouverture. Toussaint was lured to France by Napoleon's promise to honour the abolition of slavery decreed by the Convention in 1794. The pledge was broken, and Toussaint died in captivity in 1803. By 'Philip II' Stendhal means Philip II of Spain.]

dreams of liberty and forced them to make him their president. The Genoese aristocracy, more contemptible than the Venetian, was saved for a time by the shrewdness of one of its nobles who, at first a friend of Napoleon, later underwent several years of persecution as a result of that flash of patriotism. Helvetia was forced to accept his mediation. Yet while he prevented the birth of liberty in Italy, he sought to restore it in Switzerland. He brought the Canton of Vaud into existence and saved that beautiful country, where liberty survives even today, from the degrading tyranny of the Bernese aristocracy. Germany was divided and re-divided among its princes according to his ideas, those of Russia and the corruption of his minister.[124]

Such, in the course of a single year,[125] were the exploits of this great man.

The writers of scurrilous lampoons, and Madame de Staël, see in this only misfortune for the human race; the truth is just the opposite. For the past century it is not exactly good intentions that have been lacking in Europe, but the energy necessary to shift the massive bulk of established habits. Henceforth, any great movement can only benefit the morality, that is the happiness, of the human race. Every shock to which all such worn-out ideas are subjected brings them closer to a true balance.[126]

It is asserted that on his return from the electoral meeting at Lyons, the First Consul thought of having himself proclaimed Emperor of the Gauls. Ridicule served him well. On the boulevards could be seen a caricature which depicted a child shepherding some turkeys with a long thin pole (*gaule*), and underneath was the caption: *Empire of the Gauls*. The consular guard, by its murmurs, showed him that it had not yet forgotten his cries of *Long live the republic*, which had so often led them to victory. Lannes, the bravest of his generals, who had twice saved his life in Italy and whose friendship for him

124 [Talleyrand.]

125 [1801–2.]

126 See the states reorganized after Napoleon's fall. Compare them with what they were before conquest. Geneva, Frankfurt, etc. A nation's traditions are its wealth.

was almost a passion, made a scene in his presence in defence of republicanism.

But a servile Senate and a heedless people made him consul for life with power to designate his successor.[127] There remained nothing further for him to desire except an empty title. The extraordinary events which we are about to describe clothed him soon after in imperial purple.[128]

24 *THE INFERNAL MACHINE*[129]

The First Consul's moderation, so different from the violence of previous governments, filled the royalists with wild and boundless hopes. The Cromwell of the French Revolution had just appeared, and they were simple-minded enough to see in him a second General Monk.[130] Realizing their mistake, they sought to avenge their misplaced hopes, and it was this that produced the infernal machine.[131]

An unknown man asked a child to look after a small handcart on which was a barrel. This was at night, at the entrance to the rue Saint-Nicaise. Seeing the carriage of the first consul leaving the Tuileries on its way to the Opera, the unknown man walked rapidly away. Instead of stopping before the little cart which was in its way, the consul's coachman put his horses to the gallop, at risk of overturning the cart.[132] Two seconds later, the cart exploded with a terrific noise, scattering far and wide the bodies of the unfortunate child and of some thirty passers-by who were in the street at the time. The consul's carriage, which was only twenty feet or so from the

127 [In August 1802. The decision was promulgated by a *Senatus-consultum* (decree of the Senate) announcing the result of a plebiscite, over 3½ million voting in favour, 8374 against.]

128 Perhaps delete 'soon after'. Corrected on 29 June 1818.

129 30 June 1818.

130 [In 1660, after the death of Cromwell, at General Monk's invitation Charles II returned to England as king.]

131 [This attempted assassination took place on 24 December 1800.]

132 See Las Cases.

cart, was saved, because it had just turned the corner into the rue de Malte.[133] Napoleon always believed that Lord Wyndham, the English minister in Paris, had a hand in this attempt. He said so to Fox in the celebrated conversation which these two great men had at the Tuileries.[134] Fox strongly denied it, and fell back upon the well-known integrity of the English government. Napoleon, who had an infinite respect for him, had the good manners not to laugh.[135]

The peace with England which had been concluded in the meantime put an end to royalist intrigues, but soon afterwards, when war again broke out, they renewed their plotting. Georges Cadoudal,[136] Pichegru and other émigrés arrived secretly in Paris. The quiet Moreau, carried away by the proposals of his staff-officers who sought to make their general ambitious, persuaded himself that he was the first consul's enemy and joined in the plot. There were meetings in Paris where plans were discussed for the assassination of Napoleon and the setting up of a new form of government.

25 *PICHEGRU CONSPIRACY; AFFAIR OF CAPTAIN WRIGHT*[137]

Pichegru and Georges[138] were arrested. Pichegru strangled himself in the prison of the Temple. Georges was executed. Moreau was tried and condemned to imprisonment. His

133 Here Las Cases.

134 [1802.]

135 The truth will be known later. Meanwhile one may read the *Memoirs* of the Count de Vauban, who was the General Lannes of the émigrés, and the pamphlets of M. de Montgaillard. [The Count de Vauban was a royalist agent, aide-de-camp to the Count d'Artois, and the author of *Memoirs on the History of the War in the Vendée* (1806). Marshal Lannes was known as the bravest of Napoleon's generals. Montgaillard was a political intriguer and pamphleteer.]

136 Cadoudal's family has just been granted titles of nobility by His Majesty Louis XVIII.

137 All that follows to be merged with Las Cases, 30 June 1818.

138 [Cadoudal.]

sentence was commuted and he left for America. The Duke d'Enghien, grandson of the Prince de Condé,[139] who lived in the territory of Baden, a few miles from the French border, was arrested by the French police, taken to Vincennes, tried, condemned and executed as an émigré and conspirator. Of the lesser members of this conspiracy, some were executed while most were pardoned. The death sentence was commuted to one of imprisonment. Captain Wright, who had disembarked the conspirators and who appeared to have known of their plans, was captured on the French coast, and shut up for more than a year in the tower of the Temple, where he was so harshly treated that he put an end to his life.

The discovery of this conspiracy procured for Napoleon the last and greatest object of his ambition. He was made Emperor of the French, while the empire was to be hereditary in his family.[140]

'That fellow', remarked one of his own ambassadors, 'knows how to take advantage of everything.'

Such I believe to be the true story of these great events.[141] Once again I would point out that the whole truth about Bonaparte cannot possibly be known for at least a century. I have never found any proof capable of withstanding the slightest scrutiny,[142] that Pichegru and Captain Wright met their deaths otherwise than at their own hands.

139 [Leading émigré general during the Revolutionary Wars.]

140 [May 1804.]

141 Furthermore: Napoleon must have felt acutely the loss of Lucien, whom he had sent away out of a very natural feeling of jealousy and because of the ascendancy of the Beauharnais party [Empress Josephine, her son Eugene and daughter Hortense]. Lucien had something that was lacking in Napoleon, and would have stopped him from giving in to that fatal blindness which little by little turned him into a common despot. *Biographie des hommes vivants*, Vol. I, p. 543. [Lucien distanced himself from Napoleon on his becoming emperor and went into retirement in 1804.]

142 Never would greater benefits appear to have established greater claims. It would have been better for the happiness of France if Napoleon had died while engaged in monarchizing his admirable army at the Boulogne camp.

What would have been Napoleon's motive for having Pichegru killed in secret? Since the iron character of the First Consul terrified Europe and France, the most impolitic thing he could do would be to give his enemies a pretext to accuse him of a crime. The army's affection for Pichegru[143] had been diminished by his long absence and completely destroyed by a crime which in France public opinion never forgives: that of openly trafficking with the nation's enemies. The most impartial council of war would undoubtedly have condemned General Pichegru to death, either as a traitor who had had connections with the enemies of France, or for having conspired against the established government, or finally as a deportee who had returned to the territory of the republic.

But, it is said, Pichegru had been subjected to torture, his thumbs had been pinched in the hammer of a gun, and Napoleon was afraid that this atrocity might become known. I would like to point out that the atrocious practice of exacting evidence under torture has only been abolished in France since the Revolution, and that most of the crowned heads of Europe still employ it in cases of plotting against their persons. And finally, it is better to run the risk of being accused of cruelty than of murder, while it would have been an easy matter to have thrown the blame on an inferior who could have been punished.[144] It would have been possible for Pichegru to be condemned to death by a decision that would have seemed just in the nation's eyes, and then to have his sentence commuted to life imprisonment. It should be noted that the hope of obtaining a confession by torture was not one calculated for men of Pichegru's character. As with a young brave, this base resource would only have served to fire the general's dauntless character. English and French prisoners in the Temple saw Pichegru's body, and no man worthy of confidence ever said he saw any traces of torture.

As for the affair of Captain Wright, it calls for a little more discussion. He was neither a traitor nor a spy. He openly served his government, which was at war with France. The English say that when the Bourbons helped the pretenders of

143 [Pichegru had been a successful general in revolutionary France but was deported in 1797.]

144 Corrected on 17 December [1817.]

the House of Stuart in their repeated attempts against the constitution and religion of England, their government never treated with excessive harshness any of the French engaged in these enterprises who fell into their hands. When the fortunate outcome of the battle of Culloden,[145] unlike that of Waterloo, quenched the last hopes of the English exiles, Frenchmen in the service of the Pretender were made prisoners of war and treated exactly like prisoners taken in Flanders or Germany. My answer is that probably none of those French officers was captured while engaged in a murderous attempt on the unlawful King of England.

It may be said that Napoleon had Wright closely confined in prison and used excessive severity, but after what has happened in Spain and France over the last two years, there is no doubt that legitimate kings would have treated the unhappy captain with even more revolting cruelty. There is nothing to prove that Napoleon had him put to death. What had he to gain from such a crime which, from his knowledge of the English press, would have resounded throughout Europe?

A very simple reflection will suffice to give direct proof of this. If the crime were in fact true, would we need to seek proof of it in 1818?[146] Are the gaolers who guarded Pichegru and Captain Wright all dead? The police of France are in the hands of a man of superior intelligence,[147] and these men have not been publicly interrogated. The same thing applies to the men who would have been employed to murder Pichegru and Captain Wright. Is it for the sake of sparing Napoleon's reputation that the Bourbon government has not had recourse to this simple measure? At the trial of the unfortunate General Bonnaire, there were soldiers who replied quite freely that

145 [The Stuart claimant to the English throne, Charles Edward Stuart, known as 'The Young Pretender', was defeated at Culloden in 1745.]

146 Good. 30 June.

147 [The minister of police, the Duke de Decazes.]

they well remembered having fired on Gordon, to judges who could have had them shot in their turn.[148]

26 *AFFAIR OF CAPTAIN WRIGHT (CONTINUED)*

At Saint Helena, Warden, the surgeon,[149] who appears to be a typical Englishman – that is, a cold, narrow-minded and honest man who hates Napoleon – one day told him that the truths of the Holy Gospel had not seemed more evident to him than his crimes. Carried away in spite of himself by the simplicity and greatness of soul of the man to whom he was speaking, Warden gave free rein to his feelings.[150] Napoleon appeared satisfied, and in gratitude for his frankness inquired, to Warden's great astonishment, whether he remembered the story of Captain Wright. Warden replied: 'Perfectly well, and there is not a soul in England who does not believe that you had him put to death in the Temple.'

He replied very sharply. 'With what object? Of all men, he was the one whose life was of most use to me. Where could I have found a more unimpeachable witness for the trial that was being prepared against the conspirators? It was he who had landed the leaders of the conspiracy on the French coast. Listen,' Napoleon continued, 'and you will learn everything. Your government sent a brig commanded by Captain Wright, which landed murderers and spies on the west coast of France. Seventy of these people succeeded in reaching Paris, and the whole business had been so cleverly carried out, that although Count Réal of the Ministry of Police had told me of their arrival, their hiding-place could never be found. Every day I received fresh reports from my ministers informing me

148 [General Bonnaire was commander in the Condé region during the Hundred Days. In July 1815 Colonel Gordon, an emissary from Louis XVIII, was shot by order of Bonnaire's aide-de-camp. Bonnaire and his aide-de-camp were court-martialled in 1816. Bonnaire died soon after.]

149 [William Warden, naval surgeon, author of *Letters from St Helena*, 1816.]

150 Page 128, 6th edition, published by Ackerman.

that there was to be an attempt on my life, and although I did not think this was as probable as they did, I took precautions for my safety.

'It so happened that the brig commanded by Captain Wright was captured near Lorient. This officer was taken before the Prefect of Morbihan at Vannes. General Julien, who at that time was the prefect, and who had been with me in Egypt, at once recognized Captain Wright. General Julien received orders to have each sailor or officer of the English ship's company questioned separately, and for the reports of these interrogations to be sent to the minister of police.

'At first the reports appeared to be fairly insignificant. However, in the end, the statements made by a member of the crew gave them what they sought. He said that the brig had landed several Frenchmen, and he particularly remembered one of them, very cheerful and good company, called Pichegru. That one word uncovered a conspiracy which, had it succeeded, would for a second time have plunged the French nation into the hazards of a revolution. Captain Wright was taken to the Temple. He was to have remained there until it was thought appropriate to begin the trial of the conspirators. French law would have sent Captain Wright to the scaffold. But this was a detail of no importance. The essential thing was to make sure of the ringleaders.' The emperor concluded by giving a definite assurance several times that Captain Wright had taken his own life as stated in the *Moniteur,* and much earlier than is generally believed.

When, on the island of Elba, Lord Ebrington mentioned the death of Captain Wright to the emperor, he did not at first remember the English name; but when he learned that he had been a companion of Sir Sidney Smith,[151] he said: 'Did he die in prison, then? I have completely forgotten the circumstance.' He denied ever having contemplated murder as an act of state, and added that he had never had a man put to death in a clandestine fashion or without a preliminary trial. 'My conscience is clear on this point. Had I felt less repugnance for bloodshed, perhaps I would not be here now.'

151 [Admiral Sir Sidney Smith successfully defended Acre against Napoleon during the Egyptian campaign, 1799.]

The evidence of M. de Maubreuil might lead one to believe that this repugnance for murder is not so widespread as is thought.[152]

27 *DEATH OF THE DUKE D'ENGHIEN*

After the story of Captain Wright, the surgeon Warden tells how, to his great astonishment, Napoleon began to talk about the death of the Duke d'Enghien. He spoke with animation, frequently getting up from the sofa on which he was lying.

'At that period of my life, so full of incident,[153] I had succeeded in restoring law and order to an empire that had been turned upside down by political factions and which was drenched in blood. A great people had placed me at their head. Note that I did not reach the throne like your Cromwell or your Richard III. Nothing of the kind. I found a crown in the gutter. I wiped away the mud which covered it and placed it on my head. My life was indispensable to the continued existence of the order which had been so recently restored, and which I had successfully maintained, as was recognized in France by the leaders of public opinion.

'At that time, reports were brought to me every night, and all those reports informed me that a conspiracy was afoot, and that meetings were taking place at private houses in Paris. Yet it was impossible to obtain satisfactory proof. All the vigilance of a tireless police force was being eluded. My ministers even went so far as to suspect General Moreau. They frequently urged me to sign a warrant for his arrest. But at that time the general had such a great reputation in France that it seemed to me he had everything to lose and nothing to gain by plotting against me. I refused to order his arrest. I said to the minister of police:

[152] See the evidence of M. de Maubreuil, Marquis d'Aulay, taken down in shorthand and which is going around Paris in manuscript form. [Maubreuil put it about that he was approached by Talleyrand to assassinate Napoleon in 1814.] Careful. More than careful.

[153] Warden, p. 144.

"'You have given me the names of Pichegru, Georges and Moreau. Give me proof that Pichegru is in Paris, and I will have Moreau arrested immediately."

'A peculiar circumstance led to the discovery of the plot. One night, when I was restless and unable to sleep, I got up and began to look through the list of conspirators. Chance, which after all rules the world, caused my eye to light upon the name of a surgeon recently returned from imprisonment in England. The man's age, education and experience of life gave me reason to think that his behaviour sprang from quite different motives than that of a young man's enthusiasm for the Bourbons. As far as I could judge from the facts, the man's aim was money. He was arrested and brought before police agents disguised as judges, by whom he was condemned to death; and he was told that the sentence would be carried out within six hours. This trick produced its desired effect, and he confessed.

'It was known that Pichegru had a brother, an old monk living quietly in Paris. The monk was arrested, and as the police were taking him away, he muttered something which finally revealed what I so much needed to know: "It is because I gave shelter to a brother that I am treated like this."

'The first news of Pichegru's arrival in Paris had been given by a police spy who reported overhearing a curious conversation between Moreau, Pichegru and Georges, in a house on the boulevards. It had been agreed that Georges would get rid of Bonaparte, Moreau would be first consul and Pichegru second consul. Georges insisted that he should be third consul. To this the others objected that since he was an acknowledged royalist, any attempt to associate him with the government would ruin them all in the eyes of the public. Whereupon the fiery Cadoudal exclaimed: "Then if it is not to be me, I am for the Bourbons; and if it is not to be them or me, if it is to be a republican, I am as happy for it to be Bonaparte, rather than you."

'When Moreau was arrested and questioned, he began by replying disdainfully, but when the official report of this conversation was shown to him, he fainted.

'The object of the plot', continued Napoleon, 'was my death, and had it not been discovered it would have succeeded. This

plot originated in the capital city of your country. The Count d'Angoumois was behind the whole affair.[154] He sent the Duke of Burgundy to the west[155] and the Duke d'Enghien to the east. Your ships landed the lesser agents of the conspiracy on the French coast. It might have been a crucial moment for me, and I felt my throne rock. I resolved to strike back hard at the Barmecides,[156] even if it were to be in the capital city of the British empire.

'My ministers urged me to have the Duke d'Enghien arrested although he was living on neutral territory. I continued to hesitate. Twice the Prince of Ben[evento][157] brought me the arrest-warrant and urged me to sign it with all the energy of which he was capable. I was surrounded by murderers whom I was unable to discover. I did not give way until I was convinced that it was necessary.

'It was an easy matter to arrange with the Duke of Baden. Why should I leave an individual living on the frontiers of my empire free to commit a crime which, a mile nearer to me, would have led him to the scaffold? In these circumstances did I not perceive the principle on which your own government acted when it ordered the taking of the Danish fleet?[158]

'I had it dinned into my ears that the new dynasty could never be established so long as a single Bourbon remained. Talleyrand never swerved from this principle. It was the foundation, the cornerstone of his political creed. I examined the idea with great attention, and the result of my reflections was to cause me to agree entirely with Talleyrand. A proper

154 Warden, p. 147.

155 [Under the fictitious names of the Count d'Angoumois and the Duke of Burgundy, Stendhal meant the Count d'Artois and his son, the Duke de Berry.]

156 [The Bourbons.]

157 [Talleyrand.]

158 [In 1801 and again in 1807 the British government ordered a pre-emptive strike on the Danish fleet at Copenhagen.]

right to defend my person, a proper concern for public order,[159] caused me to decide against the Duke d'Enghien. I gave orders for him to be arrested and tried. He was condemned to death and shot, which was no more than would have happened had he been Louis IX himself.[160] The murderers had been sent against me from London. The Count d'Angoumois[161] was behind them. Are not any measures legitimate against assassination?'

28 *DEATH OF THE DUKE D'ENGHIEN (CONTINUED)*

No justification for the murder can in fact be based on anything other than proof that the young prince himself had taken part in the plot against Napoleon's life. The proof was referred to in the sentence pronounced at Vincennes, but has never been made public. Here is another account of the event given by Napoleon to Lord Ebrington:

'The Duke d'Enghien was engaged in a plot to kill me. He had made two trips to Strasbourg in disguise. In consequence I gave orders for him to be seized and tried by a military commission which condemned him to death. I was told that he asked to speak to me, which moved me, because I knew him to be a decent and talented young man. I even think I might perhaps have seen him, but M. de Talleyrand stopped me, saying:

'"Do not go and compromise yourself with a Bourbon. You do not know what the consequences may be. The thing is done now and we must go through with it."'

Upon Lord Ebrington inquiring if it were true that the duke had been shot by artificial light, the emperor replied animatedly:

[159] See the massacres at Nîmes. The best account is that of a Protestant minister at London, M ... See *Lyons in 1817* by Colonel Fabvier [1818.]

[160] [Stendhal has Louis XVIII in mind.] Warden, 6th edn, p. 149.

[161] [Count d'Artois.]

'Oh no, that would have been against the law. The execution took place at the customary hour, and I gave orders for the report on the execution and sentence to be posted up immediately in every town in France.'

It is remarkable that in this and in other conversations on the same subject Napoleon always seemed to think that to have seen the Duke d'Enghien and to have pardoned him were one and the same thing. James II, who was a very pious king, did not think so when he granted an audience to his brother's favourite son,[162] with the fixed determination of having his head cut off when he left his room. This is because clemency is always closely allied to great courage.

29 *DEATH OF THE DUKE D'ENGHIEN (CONTINUED)*[163]

'Your country also accuses me of Pichegru's death,' continued the emperor. 'The great majority of English people firmly believe that you had him strangled in the Temple,' replied Warden.

Napoleon replied heatedly:

'Sheer stupidity! An excellent proof of how passion can blunt that sureness of judgement of which the English are so proud! Why commit a crime by killing a man whom every law of his country would have sent to the scaffold? If it were a question of Moreau, your suspicions would be excusable. Had this general met his death in prison there would have been reason not to believe in suicide. Moreau was beloved by the army and the people, and his death in the shadow of a prison would never have been forgiven me, however much I was innocent of it.'

[162] [The Duke of Monmouth, illegitimate son of Charles II, led a rebellion against James II in 1685.]

[163] Georges, Pichegru, Moreau: here is another justification of an act of Napoleon which takes up too much space. Likewise the facts in question include a great deal of repetition and verbosity. [Note by Vismara.] True. 30 June. [Note by Stendhal.]

'Napoleon stopped speaking,' Warden continues, 'and I replied:

'"One may agree with you, General, that at that period of your history stringent measures were necessary, but no one, I think, will undertake to justify the precipitate way in which the young Duke d'Enghien was kidnapped, tried and executed."

'He replied heatedly:

'"In my own opinion I was justified, and I repeat what I have already stated, that I would have ordered the execution of Louis IX[164] with the same deliberation. Why did they seek to assassinate me? Since when is it forbidden to open fire on a murderer who tries to shoot you? I swear with equal solemnity that no message or letter from the Duke d'Enghien reached me after he had been condemned."'

Warden adds:

'It is said that there exists a letter from the young prince to Napoleon, which is in the hands of M. de Talleyrand; but that the minister took it upon himself not to deliver it until the hand which penned it was already cold. I have seen a copy of this letter in the possession of Count Las Cases. He showed it to me quite coolly, as part of the mass of secret documents capable of proving certain mysterious points of the history he is writing at Napoleon's dictation.[165]

'The young prince asked for his life. He said that in his opinion the Bourbon dynasty was finished. That was his firm belief. He now looked on France only as his fatherland, and as such he cherished it with the genuine ardour of a patriot, but that all his feelings were those of a mere citizen. The prospect of a crown played no part in his conduct, as it was forever lost to the former dynasty. He therefore begged leave to devote his life and services to France, solely in his capacity as a Frenchman born in France. He was ready to accept any type of command in the French army and to become a brave and loyal soldier, wholly obedient to the orders of the government,

164 [Louis XVIII.]

165 [*Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène: Journal of the Private Life and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon at Saint Helena*, published in 1823.]

in whichever hands it might be placed. He was prepared to take an oath of allegiance. He concluded by saying that if his life were spared, he would devote it with courage and unswerving fidelity to defending France against her enemies.'

30 *BONAPARTE AND THE BOURBONS*

Napoleon contined to talk of the Barmecide family.[166]

'Had I cherished the desire to have all the B ... in my power, or any member of this family, I could easily have done so. Your smugglers offered me a B ... for 40,000 francs. But when it came to a more detailed understanding, they did not absolutely guarantee to hand over a living B ... But dead or alive, they had no doubts about being able to fulfil their engagement. It was not my sole aim, however, to do away with them. Things were falling into place so well as far as I was concerned, that I felt sure of my throne. I had peace of mind myself, and I offered peace of mind to the B .... Whatever may have been said about me in England, killing for killing's sake was never one of my maxims. For what purpose could I have entertained such a horrible point of view? When Sir George Rumbold and Mr Drake, who were used to maintain contact with the conspirators in Paris, were taken prisoner, they were not put to death.'[167]

31 *DEATH OF THE DUKE D'ENGHIEN*

I have not interrupted Napoleon's account. Two thoughts come to mind. On the subject of Pichegru, it may be said that the whole of this exercise in vindication boils down to the old maxim: 'The culprit is the man who profits from the crime.'

166 [The Bourbons.]

167 [Two British diplomats, Sir George Rumbold, consul at Hamburg, and Sir Francis Drake, minister at Munich, were kidnapped and brought to Paris at Napoleon's order on suspicion of involvement in the Pichegru and Cadoudal conspiracies.]

On the other hand, is despotism never subject to inexplicable whims? All these arguments would be equally valid for proving that Napoleon never threatened to have MM. Laîné, Flaugergues and Renouard shot![168]

On the subject of the death of the Duke d'Enghien, in ten years' time one may well ask by how many degrees it was more unjust than that of the Duke d'El[chingen].[169] At the time of the death of the Duke d'Enghien it was said at court that his life had been sacrificed to the apprehensions of the purchasers of national properties.[170] I have it from General Duroc that Empress Josephine threw herself at Napoleon's feet to intercede for the duke. Napoleon pushed her aside in a temper and left the room. She dragged herself on her knees as far as the door. During the night she wrote him two letters; her kind heart was truly in a torment.

I have heard it said at court that the aide-de-camp of Marshal Moncey, who brought the news that the duke had visited Strasbourg in disguise, had been misled. The young prince was carrying on an intrigue in Baden with a woman whom he did not wish to compromise, and in order to meet her he would disappear from time to time, or would live for seven or eight days in the cellar of this lady's house. During these absences it was thought that he had gone to Strasbourg to plot. It was this circumstance above all that had decided the emperor. The memoirs of Count Réal, Count Lavalette and the Dukes of Rovigo and of Vicenza will clarify all this.[171]

In any event, Napoleon would have spared himself the painful task of justifying himself in the eyes of posterity if, before

168 [Members of the Legislative Body, they were commissioned to report on allied peace offers in 1813. They recommended acceptance and constitutional reform, much to Napoleon's anger.]

169 [Marshal Ney. On Napoleon's return from Elba, Ney promised Louis XVIII to bring Napoleon back to Paris 'in an iron cage', but rejoined Napoleon and fought for him at Waterloo. Ney was tried and executed by firing squad in December 1815.] Careful.

170 [Church and émigré property sequestrated and sold during the French Revolution.]

171 [The Duke of Rovigo was General Savary, the Duke of Vicenza was General Caulaincourt. Réal, Lavalette, Savary and Caulaincourt were all involved in the elimination of the Duke d'Enghien.]

having the Duke d'Enghien arrested, he had waited for him to go to Strasbourg for a third time.

It may be asked whether freedom of the press would ever have harmed the first consul as much as did its subservience in the matter of the conspiracy of 1804. No one lent the least credence to the story of the conspiracy. The First Consul was considered to have gratuitously murdered the Duke d'Enghien, and to have thought his own position sufficiently insecure for him to fear the influence of Moreau. Despite these drawbacks I think that Napoleon the tyrant did well to fetter the press.[172] The French nation has a fortunate characteristic: in France the great majority of thinking people consists of small landowners with an annual income of twenty louis. Nowadays this class alone possesses the energy which has been destroyed by good manners in the higher ranks of society. In the long run this class only understands and believes what it sees in print. The talk of the fashionable world dies out before reaching it, or soon fades from its memory. There was only one way in the world of making it aware of what it had not seen in print, and that was to arouse its fears on the subject of the national properties.

As for Moreau, this general should have been put to use. He should have been placed in circumstances that would have fully exposed his weaknesses. For instance, to have caused him to lose his reputation during an expedition like that of Masséna's in Portugal.[173]

32 *PLANS FOR THE INVASION OF ENGLAND*

Plans for the invasion of England were abandoned because the emperor failed to find in the navy those truly admirable gifts

[172] All that follows about the press is very good, but it should be made into a separate chapter; it is out of place here. That chapter should deal with two subjects: what were N[apoleon]'s ideas on liberty? What were N[apoleon]'s ideas on the press? How did he claim to promote these ideas for his own ends? [Note by Vismara.]

[173] [Marshal Masséna commanded the French army in Portugal in 1810, was forced to retreat by Wellington, and was recalled in 1811.]

which the Revolution had fostered in the ranks of the army. It was a curious thing, but French officers seemed to lack character.

Through conscription, the emperor had *an annual intake of eighty thousand men*.[174] With hospital wastage that was sufficient to fight four big battles a year. In four years the invasion of England could have been attempted eight times, and for anyone familiar with the vagaries of the sea, one of these landings might well have succeeded. Look at the French fleet which left Toulon, took Malta and reached Egypt.[175] Ireland, oppressed by the most abominable and bloody tyranny,[176] might very well have welcomed the foreigners in an access of despair.[177]

On setting foot in England, the estates of the three hundred peers would have been divided among the poor, the constitution of the United States of America would have been proclaimed, the English authorities would have been reorganized, and Jacobinism would have been encouraged.[178] It would have been stated that the French had been called in by the oppressed section of the population, that they only sought to destroy a government as harmful to France as it was to England, and that they were prepared to withdraw. If, against every appearance, a nation, one-third of which lives on charity, disregarded this language, some of which was sincere, the forty most important towns were to be burned down. It was highly probable that fifteen million people, of which a fifth is pushed to the limit by the government, and all of

[174] In 1788, under the Old Regime, France had 25 million inhabitants. In 1818 she has over 29 millions. This is because the number of men is always proportionate to the number of grains of wheat. See the appendix to the work on France of M. Le Sur, Paris, end of 1817. This appendix is supplied by the ministries.

[175] [In June 1798.]

[176] See the *Edinburgh Review*, No. 56 or 55. [The number in question was 54, containing an article on the Catholic question in Ireland.]

[177] [Attempted French landings in Ireland in 1796 and 1798 were frustrated by the British navy. An Irish rebellion in 1798 was crushed.]

[178] [Such were Napoleon's intentions as divulged by him to O'Meara (*Napoleon in Exile or a Voice from St Helena*, 1822).]

whom possess courage but no military experience, would after two or three years have been unable to withstand thirty million men who, with considerable enjoyment, obeyed a despot who was at the same time a man of genius.

All this failed to take place because our navy did not possess a Nelson.[179] The French army left the camp at Boulogne for a continental war that was to confer fresh brilliance on the emperor's military reputation, and raise him to a peak of greatness such as Europe had not seen in any sovereign since the time of Charlemagne.[180] For the second time Napoleon defeated the House of Austria and committed the mistake of sparing it. He only deprived it of its Venetian states, and forced Emperor Francis to renounce his ancient imperial title and the influence which it still conferred on him in Germany.[181] The battle of Austerlitz is probably a masterpiece of its kind.[182]

The people noticed in amazement that the victory was won on December 2nd, the anniversary of Napoleon's coronation. From then on, no one in France was any longer shocked by that absurd ceremony.

33 *PRUSSIAN CAMPAIGN*

The following year, the emperor defeated Prussia, which had not had the courage to join with Austria and Russia. There is no parallel in history: an army of two hundred thousand was wiped out in a single battle, which gained the victor a great kingdom. This was because Napoleon understood even better how to take advantage of a victory than how to inflict a

179 Neither a Nelson, nor a Lord Cochrane. See the story of Admiral Villeneuve. [Defeated by Nelson at Trafalgar in 1805, Villeneuve committed suicide.]

180 [Emperor of the West, 800–14 CE.]

181 [Francis ceased to be Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (Germany) on its dissolution by Napoleon in 1806, and took the title of Emperor of Austria.]

182 [At Austerlitz, 2 December 1805, Napoleon defeated Austria and Russia.]

defeat. On 16 October he attacked at Jena, not without some qualms, that army which had seemed to be sustained by the mighty shade of Frederick the Great. On the 26th, Napoleon entered Berlin.[183] To our great amazement the band played the republican air: *Allons, enfants de la patrie*.[184] Napoleon, wearing for the first time the uniform of a general and with an embroidered hat, rode his horse twenty feet in front of his troops in the midst of the crowd. Nothing would have been easier than to fire a shot at him from one of the windows on *Unter den Linden*.[185]

It is sad to have to add that the silent crowd did not greet him with a single cheer.

For the first time the emperor returned from his conquests with money. Over and above the upkeep of the army and its equipment, Austria and Prussia each paid about one hundred millions. The emperor was hard on Prussia. He found the Germans the best people in the world to conquer. A hundred Germans are always down on their knees before a uniform. That is what the petty despotism of four hundred princes[186] has done to the descendants of Arminius and Witigis.[187]

It was then that Napoleon made the mistake that was to cost him his throne.[188] Nothing would have been easier for him than to have placed anyone he wished on the thrones of Prussia and Austria. He could also have given those countries a bicameral government, with a semi-liberal constitution. He abandoned the old Jacobin principle of finding allies against

183 [The battle of Jena in fact took place on 14 October and Napoleon's entry into Berlin (which Stendhal witnessed) on 27 October.]

184 [The *Marseillaise*.]

185 [The main thoroughfare of Berlin.]

186 [Until Napoleon's abolition of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, Germany consisted of some 350 sovereign states.]

187 [Respectively, German and Goth chieftains who resisted the Romans in the first and fifth centuries CE.]

188 Everything shows that he missed his big chances in politics. There should be some depiction of him from this angle. [Note by Vismara.] [At St Helena Napoleon agreed that he erred in not replacing the ruling dynasties of Prussia and Austria.]

the kings in the hearts of their subjects. As a newly made king himself, he was already cultivating in the hearts of the people a respect for the throne.[189]

People around him knew that public opinion was telling him which princes to raise to the throne; this meant a great deal.[190] The German people would have tasted liberty, would have used their strength to obtain a wholly liberal constitution, and at the end of three or four years would have had for him a profound feeling of gratitude. There would have been no *Tugendbund*, no *Landwehr*,[191] no burning zeal. For their part, the new sovereigns would have had neither the strength nor the wish to let themselves be bribed by England into forming a coalition against France.

34 *NAPOLEON AND ALEXANDER*

At Tilsit[192] Napoleon exacted nothing from Russia except that she should close her ports to England. He was master of the Russian army, for Emperor Alexander himself says that he had ended the war because he lacked muskets. The Russian army, so imposing today, was then in a piteous state.[193] It was lucky for the czar that the emperor had conceived the Continental System at Berlin.[194] Alexander and Napoleon had the most

189 See in the *Moniteur* 1809 the reasons he gives for not having made his entry into Vienna.

190 Careful.

191 [The *Tugendbund* (League of Virtue, or Moral and Scientific Union) was founded in 1808 as a focus of German national resistance to Napoleon. The *Landwehr* was a volunteer defence militia founded in Prussia in 1813.]

192 [At Tilsit in July 1807 Napoleon concluded an alliance with Emperor Alexander I of Russia.]

193 See the pamphlet by General Wilson published in 1806. [Wilson's pamphlet, *Sketch on the Military Power of Russia*, in fact appeared in 1817.]

194 [That is, rather than invading Russia in 1805/6 and imposing the Continental System from Moscow or St Petersburg. At Berlin in 1806 Napoleon declared economic war on Britain by imposing a Europe-wide ban on British goods under the so-called Continental System.]

intimate conversations and discussions that would greatly have surprised their subjects had they been in a position to hear them.

'During the two weeks we spent together at Tilsit,' said Napoleon, 'we dined together almost every day. We rose early from table so as to be rid of the King of Prussia, who bored us.[195] At nine o'clock the emperor, in plain clothes, came to take tea with me. We remained together, talking casually of various subjects, until two or three in the morning. As a rule we talked politics and philosophy. The czar is well informed and holds liberal opinions. He owes all that to his tutor, Colonel Laharpe. I was occasionally hard put to it to know whether the sentiments he expressed were his real opinions or the result of that vanity, common in France, of taking up a point of view contrary to one's real position.'

In one of these *tête-à-têtes* the two emperors discussed the comparative advantages of hereditary and elective monarchy. The hereditary despot was for elective monarchy, while the soldier of fortune was for the hereditary order.

'How small the chances are that a man called to the throne by the hazard of birth will have the talents necessary to rule.'

'How few men', replied Napoleon, 'have possessed the qualities which give them the right to such high distinction: a Caesar, an Alexander. There is not one such in a whole century. After all, an election is also a question of luck, and rule by hereditary succession is surely better than the throw of the dice.'

Napoleon left the north, firmly convinced that he had made a friend of Emperor Alexander, which was rather ridiculous. But it was a noble error of a kind that rightly confounds his detractors.[196] At the same time it proves that he was unsuited to politics. With pen in hand he always spoilt what he had

[195] Careful.

[196] [Stendhal first wrote, 'It proves his greatness and generosity of spirit.' Vismara noted, 'Why cross it out? And [it also proves] his poor political judgment.']

accomplished with the sword. While passing through Milan, he discussed with Melzi[197] the Continental System. It was then, with good reason, his favourite aim. This scheme is of more value than the whole of Cardinal Richelieu's life.[198] It almost succeeded and the whole of Europe is taking it up again.[199]

Melzi pointed out to him that Russia possessed raw materials but no manufactured goods, and that it was unlikely that the czar would long remain faithful to a measure which so openly offended against the interests of the nobility, in a country where those interests were so dangerous to the sovereign. To which Napoleon replied that he counted on the personal friendship which he had inspired in Alexander.[200] The Italian was taken aback by this notion. Napoleon had just told him an anecdote which proved how little one could count on the power of Alexander, even if he had been favourably disposed towards France. At Tilsit Napoleon paid particular regard to General Beningsen.[201] Alexander noticed this and asked the reason.

'Quite frankly,' said Napoleon, 'it is to pay you a compliment. You have entrusted your army to him, and it is enough that he enjoys your confidence for me to be filled with respect and friendship for him.'[202]

197 [See footnote 120. At Milan in 1807 Napoleon tightened the restrictions of the Continental System.]

198 [Richelieu was minister to Louis XIII, 1624–42.]

199 Another year of perseverance and it would have succeeded. [Stendhal's claim is dubious. The blockade caused temporary difficulties for Britain but did not affect its capacity to wage war or to sell goods overseas, in the Americas and even in Europe, where the Continental System was commonly evaded through smuggling.]

200 We cannot guarantee all this, which is literally translated from the *Edinburgh Review*, No. 54, p. 486.

201 Careful. More than careful.

202 For the sequel see *The Edinburgh Review*, No. 54, p. 486.

35 *WAGRAM CAMPAIGN*

The two emperors of the South and the North[203] saw each other at Erfurt.[204] Austria realized her peril and attacked France. Napoleon left Paris on 13 April 1809; by the 18th he was at Ingolstadt. In five days he fought six battles and won six victories. On 10 May he was at the gates of Vienna. Nevertheless, the army, already corrupted by despotism, did not do as well as it had done at Austerlitz.

If the general in command of the Austrian army had cared to follow a plan put forward, it is said, by General Bellegarde,[205] Napoleon might have been taken prisoner through having unwisely crossed the Danube at Essling. He was saved by Marshal Masséna. He made Masséna a prince, but at the same time he meant to humiliate him by conferring on him the name of a lost battle, giving him the title of Prince of Essling. The pettiness of a court is already apparent. What are the nations to make of such an honour?[206]

Austria showed a flash of good policy. She appealed to public opinion and protected the revolt in the Tyrol.[207] General Chasteller[208] distinguished himself sufficiently for the tyrant to honour him with his impotent wrath: the *Moniteur* called him the *infamous* Chasteller. In 1809, in the mountains of the Tyrol, this general began what the *Tugendbund* were to accomplish in 1813 on the battlefields of Leipzig.

203 [Napoleon and Alexander.]

204 Nothing positive is yet known about the details of the meeting at Erfurt. [At Erfurt Napoleon agreed to Russia's expansion into Finland and the Balkans.]

205 [Austrian general.]

206 Corrected on 11 January and 30 June 1818.

207 [Under the leadership of a local innkeeper, Andreas Hofer, the Tyrol revolted during 1809–10 after Napoleon transferred it from Austria to his client-kingdom of Bavaria. Hofer was captured, tried and executed on Napoleon's order in 1810.]

208 [Austrian general.]

Between the battle of Essling and the victory at Wagram, the French army was concentrated inside Vienna.[209] The revolt in the Tyrol deprived it of the means of subsistence. The army had 70,000 sick and wounded. It was a great achievement on the part of Count Daru[210] to have fed the army under these conditions, but this *tour de force* was never mentioned because it would have meant admitting the danger. During this interval, which might have proved so fatal, Prussia dared not make a move.

One of the facts which most justifies what is happening at Saint Helena, if anything unjust may ever be justified, was the death of Palm, the bookseller.[211] The emperor had him murdered near Jena by a council of war. But let despotism do what it will, it cannot destroy the printed word. If it were given the means, the throne and the altar might once again hope for a return to the happy days of the Middle Ages.

A student from Jena, with a volume of Schiller in his pocket, came to Schönbrunn to assassinate Napoleon. He was in uniform with his right arm in a sling, and with this arm he held a dagger. The student mingled easily with the crowd of wounded officers who had come to ask for rewards. But his glowering insistence on seeing the emperor and his refusal to give an account of himself to the Prince of Neuchâtel[212] who interrogated him, caused the prince to have him arrested. He confessed everything. Napoleon wished to spare him, and had the following question put to him:

'What will you do if you are given your freedom?'

'I will try again.'

The battle of Wagram[213] was splendid: 400,000 men fought all day. Struck by the bravery of the Hungarians and

209 From 22 May to 6 July 1809.

210 [Quartermaster-General of the French army. Daru was a distant relative of Stendhal and assisted him in his official career.]

211 [Johannes Palm was executed by firing squad in August 1806, after conviction by court-martial of selling a pamphlet hostile to Napoleon entitled *Germany in her Deep Humiliation*.]

212 [Marshal Berthier. The episode took place in October 1809.]

213 [French victory over Austria, 5–6 July 1809.]

remembering their national feelings, Napoleon toyed with the idea of making Hungary an independent kingdom, but he was afraid of neglecting Spain, and, furthermore, he never saw the full scope of this idea.[214]

His flatterers[215] had long put it to him that he owed it to his dynasty to choose, from among the royal families of Europe, a wife who would give him a son. At Schönbrunn the idea was mooted of having him marry an archduchess. He was extremely flattered. On 2 April 1810 he received the hand of the daughter of the Caesars.[216] That day, the most glorious of his life, he was as gloomy as Nero. He was galled by the quips of the Parisians (never did archduchess make so vile[217] a marriage) and by the cardinals' resistance.[218] On 20 March 1811 he had a son: Napoleon-François-Charles Joseph.[219] This event won him the nation's eternal devotion. In Paris enthusiasm reached its peak with a twenty-one gun salute. The French, normally so petrified by fear of ridicule, shouted their applause in the streets. In the country there was more talk than ever of the emperor's lucky star. The prestige of Fate was his.

Since he gave up being *the son of the Revolution* and now wished to be no more than a mere sovereign, repudiating the support of the nation, he did very well to make sure of the support of the most illustrious family in Europe.[220] How

214 Las Cases.

215 Carrion-Nisas. [See footnote 95.]

216 [Archduchess Marie-Louise of Austria, daughter of Francis I, the Habsburg emperor. As traditional rulers of the Holy Roman Empire until its abolition in 1806, the Habsburgs saw themselves as successors of the Roman emperors.]

217 [*Si vil* = so vile. A pun on the *civil* marriage ceremony.]

218 [Thirteen cardinals denied the validity of Napoleon's divorce from Josephine and absented themselves from his marriage to Marie-Louise.]

219 [The so-called Napoleon II. On his father's abdication in 1814 he was taken to Austria, where he died of tuberculosis in 1832.]

220 Ironical in view of 1814. [At the end of 1813 Napoleon's father-in-law, Emperor of Austria, joined the allied coalition against him.]

different it would have been for him had he allied himself with Russia![221]

36 *ON SPAIN*[222]

On the evening of the day on which the battle of Jena was fought, Napoleon was still on the battlefield when he received the Prince of Peace's proclamation calling all Spaniards to arms.[223] Napoleon was acutely aware of the peril from which he had just escaped. He saw to what alarums the south of France would be exposed at each new expedition which he might undertake in the north. He determined not to leave in his rear a treacherous friend, ready to attack him as soon as he thought he was entangled. He remembered that at Austerlitz[224] he had found the King of Naples among his enemies two weeks after he had signed a peace with his court. The way in which the Prince of Peace planned to attack France was contrary to international law as it appears to have been adopted by modern nations. M. de Talleyrand did not stop repeating to Napoleon that there would be no security for his dynasty until he had wiped out the Bourbons.[225] To dethrone them was not enough, yet one had to begin by dethroning them.

At Tilsit[226] Russia approved the emperor's plans for Spain. These plans consisted in giving Don Manuel Godoy, well

221 [Napoleon's own preference had been to ally himself with Russia by marrying a sister of Alexander I.]

222 Corrected *for the stile* [*sic*] *and to take a copy* [in English in the text] 1 July 1818. Corrected on 10 August 1818. Thirty-five pages is not too much for the Spanish business.

223 [Manuel Godoy, Spanish minister since 1792, had led Spain in and out of war with France. His plan to attack France in concert with Prussia was frustrated by Napoleon's defeat of Prussia at Jena, 14 October 1806.]

224 [December 1805.]

225 [Spain had been ruled by the Bourbon descendants of Louis XIV since 1713.]

226 [July 1807.]

known as the Prince of Peace, a principality in the Algarve. In return for this the prince, sole author of the proclamation which destroyed Spain, was to deliver up his king and benefactor to Napoleon. Under the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau[227] concluded by the Prince of Peace, Spain was overrun by imperial troops. Ultimately this favourite, as powerful as he was absurd, realized that Napoleon was making a fool of him. He thought of fleeing to Mexico. The people wished to keep their king, and from this arose the events of Aranjuez[228] which called Ferdinand VII to the throne and overthrew Napoleon's plan.

On 18 March 1808 this very stupid and very brave people revolted. The Prince of Peace, who was loathed quite as much as he deserved, passed from supreme power into prison. A second uprising forced King Charles IV to abdicate in favour of Ferdinand VII. Napoleon was very much surprised. He had thought he was dealing with Prussians or Austrians, and that to have disposed of the court meant disposing of the nation as well. Instead of which he found a nation with a young prince at its head whom it adored, and who was apparently alien to the degradation which had weighed over Spain for the past fifteen years. This prince might possess the facile virtues of his rank, and be surrounded by men of integrity who were devoted to the country, impervious to bribery, and sustained by a people to whom fear was unknown. All that Napoleon knew about the Prince of the Asturias was that in 1807 he had dared to write asking him for the hand in marriage of one of his nieces, a daughter of Lucien Bonaparte.[229]

After the events at Aranjuez, all classes of the Spanish population were filled with enthusiasm. Yet the foreigner[230] at the very heart of the state still held command in the capital, occupied the garrison towns and was the real judge between

227 [October 1807. Godoy agreed to allow French troops to cross Spain for the invasion of Portugal.]

228 [A popular uprising stormed the royal palace at Aranjuez, overthrew Godoy and deposed Charles IV in favour of his son, Prince of the Asturias, who became Ferdinand VII.]

229 Check this.

230 [Murat, who commanded the French army in Spain.]

Ferdinand VII and King Charles IV, who had just revoked his abdication and called on Napoleon for help.

In this unique situation, by a fresh stroke of the argumentative ineptitude characteristic of the ministers of a nation long detached from European progress, Ferdinand VII resolved to go to meet Napoleon. General Savary made two trips to Spain to urge the prince to come to Bayonne, but he never offered to recognize his title. The new king's advisers, who feared the vengeance of Charles IV, against whom they had conspired, saw no security except with Napoleon and yearned to reach him with their prince.

Seen from afar, these great events look curious, but a closer inspection reveals them to be merely disgusting. Spanish ministers are too stupid, and French agents too astute. It is the old, stupidly treacherous policy of Philip II fighting against the wholly modern genius of Napoleon.[231] There were two redeeming features. M. Hervas, brother of the Duchess of Friuli,[232] at danger to more than *his* life, reached Valladolid and did everything humanly possible to open the eyes of the stupidly self-important ministers of Ferdinand VII. The general in command of the frontier guards on the line of the Ebro, a brave and simple man, suggested to Ferdinand that he should kidnap him with the two thousand men at his disposal, and received a severe reprimand. That was typical of Spain's behaviour during the next six years. Stupidity, meanness and cowardice on the part of its princes, and a romantic and heroic devotion on the part of the people.

On the morning of April 20th Ferdinand VII reached Bayonne, where he was greeted as a king. In the evening General Savary came to inform him that Napoleon had decided to place his own dynasty on the Spanish throne. In consequence, Napoleon demanded that Ferdinand VII should abdicate in his favour. At that very moment the emperor was having that curious conversation with the Spanish minister Escoïquiz, in

231 See the book by M. Escoïquiz [minister to Ferdinand VII].

232 [General Duroc was made Duke of Friuli in 1808.]

which his character is so admirably revealed, as well as his entire policy towards Spain.[233]

Napoleon's plan was defective in that it offered Etruria and Portugal to the princes to be chased out of Spain. This left power in the hands of his enemies.

Ferdinand VII, victim of a base favourite,[234] a blind father, an idiotic council and a powerful neighbour, was in fact a prisoner at Bayonne. How was he to escape from such a tight corner? Short of taking wing, there was no possibility of escape, such were the precautions which had been taken. Each day they were reinforced. Day and night the ramparts of the town swarmed with soldiers, the gates were closely guarded, every face was scrutinized at entry and departure. There were rumours of attempts at escape, and surveillance became even more active. It was plain captivity. Nevertheless Ferdinand's council firmly refused to accept Etruria in exchange for Spain.

The emperor was a prey to the most violent agitation and even to remorse. He saw Europe reproaching him with keeping prisoner a prince who had come to confer with him. He was as much embarrassed at keeping Ferdinand as at releasing him. He found himself in the position of having committed a crime and of losing what he had gained by it. He said to the Spanish ministers with great truth and energy:

'You should adopt more liberal ideas, be less touchy on points of honour and not sacrifice Spain's prosperity to the interests of the Bourbon family.'

But the ministers who had led Ferdinand VII to Bayonne were not of a calibre to conceive such ideas. Compare Spain as it has been for the last four years,[235] happy in its abjection, the object of the contempt or abhorrence of other nations, with a

[233] See the works of MM. Escoïquiz and de Pradt, of which all this is just an extract.

[234] [The Duke of Infantado.]

[235] [Since the restoration in 1814 of Ferdinand VII, who revoked the constitution of 1812.]

Spain equipped with the two chambers and with Joseph[236] for a constitutional king. So much better a king in that, like Bernadotte,[237] he had only his own worth in his favour, and at the first sign of injustice or stupidity he could be dismissed and the legitimate king called in.

Never had Napoleon's mind known a more astounding activity. From one moment to the next fresh ideas would come to him which he immediately had proposed to the Spanish ministers. In such a state of anxiety man cannot simulate, and it was possible to see deep into the heart and mind of the emperor. He had the warm heart of a soldier, but a poor head for politics. The Spanish ministers, who rejected everything with high-minded indignation, cut a fine figure. They always proceeded according to the principle that Ferdinand had no right to dispose of Spain without the consent of the nation.[238] Their refusals reduced Napoleon to despair. It was the first major opposition he had encountered, and in what circumstances! As it was, the absurd Spanish council had achieved, through blindness, an enlightened act that was most awkward for its opponent.

In this mortal anxiety, Napoleon's mind seized upon every kind of idea at once, and upon every sort of project. Several times a day he would call for his negotiators; he would send them to the Spanish ministers. But there were always the same answers, protests and refusals! On his ministers' return, Napoleon would go over with them, with his customary rapidity of imagination and speech, every aspect of the question. When he was told that there was no way of persuading the Prince of the Asturias to accept the little kingdom of Etruria in exchange for the monarchies of Spain and South America, that after having seen his first throne taken from him, a second must appear very precarious to him, he replied:

236 [Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain 1808–13.]

237 [One of Napoleon's marshals, Bernadotte was elected Crown Prince of Sweden in 1810 and became King Charles XIV in 1818.]

238 A Jacobin principle rejected by the Congress of Vienna. [The Congress of Vienna proclaimed the principle of the 'legitimacy' of the restored monarchs over the 'rights' of the nation.]

'Well, let him declare war on me!'

Any man who is capable of such a singular sally is no Philip II, as some would have us believe. There was honour, great honour even, in such a retort, which also contained much wisdom.

It is to be found again in the conversation published by M. Escoïquiz: 'Furthermore, if my proposals do not suit your prince, he may, if he so desires, return to his states; but first of all we will together fix a date for this return, after which hostilities will break out between us.'

One of the men whom Napoleon employed on these negotiations claims to have raised objections to him about the nature of the task.

'Yes,' he said, 'I feel that what I am doing is not good, but let them declare war on me then!'

The emperor told his ministers: 'I must feel this enterprise to be very necessary to my peace of mind, because I am badly in need of ships, and this is going to cost me the six vessels I have at Cadiz.'

On another occasion: 'If this were to cost me eighty thousand men I would not do it. But it will not take twelve thousand, it is child's play. These people do not know what French troops are. The Prussians were like them once, and we have seen what happened to them.'

Nevertheless, after eight days of acute anxiety, since the negotiations had made no progress, a way out had to be found. Napoleon was not used to opposition. His was a nature ruined by despotism and by an unheard-of series of successes. He might have become ferocious through being thwarted. It is said that one day the words 'fortress prison'[239] escaped him. The following day he apologized to his minister:

'You must not be offended by what you heard yesterday: I would certainly not have done it.'

239 [The reference is to the state prisons that Napoleon established for political detainees.]

37 *MEETING AT BAYONNE*

Perceiving that there was nothing to hope for from the Prince of the Asturias, Napoleon had the excellent idea of picking a quarrel with him over the validity of the abdication of Charles IV. This abdication had obviously been forced, and it had then been revoked.

The Prince of Peace was taken from his prison in Madrid and on April 26th[240] he arrived at Bayonne. On May 1st, the *old rulers*, as they were called by the Spaniards, arrived. The sight of them made a great impression. They were miserable, and ancient long-preserved ceremonial is mistaken for character by the common people.

As soon as the King and Queen of Spain had entered their apartments, the French saw all the Spaniards who happened to be in Bayonne, with Prince Ferdinand at their head, perform the ceremony of kissing hands, which entails kneeling down and kissing the hands of the king and queen. Onlookers who had read that very morning in the *Gazette de Bayonne* documents relative to the events of Aranjuez and the king's protest, and who then saw this unhappy monarch receive the homage of the very same men who had hatched the plot in March, were revolted by such duplicity and looked in vain for Castilian honour. The French were unwise enough to judge the Spanish nation by the higher ranks of society which, in sentiment, are everywhere the same.

After the ceremony, the Prince of the Asturias wished to follow the *old rulers* into their private apartments. The king stopped him, saying in Spanish:

'Prince, have you not sufficiently insulted my white hairs?'

These words appeared to strike the rebellious son like a thunderbolt.[241]

240 [1808.]

241 The *Moniteur*, 6 May 1808.

38 *MEETING AT BAYONNE (CONTINUED)*

The king and queen gave Napoleon an account of the insults to which they had been subjected.

'You have no idea', they said, 'what it means to have cause to complain of a son.'

They also spoke of their contempt for their bodyguards, the cowards who had betrayed them.

The French negotiators made it clearly understood to the Prince of Peace that there was no longer any question of continuing his rule in Spain.

Already on the day preceding the arrival of Charles IV, Napoleon had sent for Escoïquiz and had instructed him to inform the Prince of the Asturias that all negotiations with him were broken off and that in future he would negotiate only with the King of Spain.

For Napoleon was now the absolute master of the wishes of the King of Spain through the intermediary of the Prince of Peace. The English have repeatedly said that violence was used as well as intrigue. The truth is that there were neither intriguers nor plotters, but, as usual, only idiots led and duped by rogues. There was also as usual a foreign ruler who was defied in a manner that was absolutely contrary to international law, and who took advantage of it all.

39 *INSURRECTION AT MADRID; ABDICATION OF KING CHARLES; CONDITION OF SPAIN*

While King Charles IV at Bayonne was ordering his son Ferdinand VII to return his crown to him, the people of Madrid, alarmed by such strange events, which were

moreover an insult to the entire nation in the person of their sovereigns, revolted on May 2nd;[242] some one hundred and fifty inhabitants and five hundred French soldiers perished. This news, greatly exaggerated, reached France on May 5th. Charles IV sent for his son. The king, the queen and Napoleon were seated. The prince, who remained standing, was overwhelmed by the most coarse abuse. Disgusted, Napoleon remarked:

'I have just left them quarrelling like street porters.'

Intimidated, the prince formally and definitively renounced the throne. On the same day, 5 May 1808, King Charles IV ceded all his Spanish rights to Napoleon. The Prince of the Asturias also ceded to Napoleon all his rights to the Spanish throne but, it is said, only after he had several times been threatened with death by the king, his father. There was the example of Don Carlos[243] and, moreover, as the prince had obviously conspired against his father and king, the most fair-minded jury in the world would have condemned him to death.

Napoleon has been accused of having gone so far as to tell him:

'Prince, you must choose between cession or death.'[244] It remains to be seen how this remark will be proved to posterity.

The Spanish Bourbons went to live in various cities. Everywhere and at every opportunity King Charles protested his affection and devotion to his august ally. No one has as yet accused Napoleon of having threatened him. As for Ferdinand VII, he went to live on the beautiful estate of Valençay.

Here ends what are known as Napoleon's treacheries. Unable to believe that his enemies had been so faint-hearted, Europe held him criminally responsible for their stupidity.

242 [The popular insurrection at Madrid on 2 May 1808 and its suppression by Murat on 3 May are the subject of two celebrated paintings by Goya.]

243 [Son of Philip II.]

244 Cevalhos [*Exposé of the Means Employed by the Emperor Napoleon to Usurp the Throne of Spain*, French edition, 1814], p. 52.

Napoleon had sent General Savary to the Prince of the Asturias to hasten his arrival, but he had never promised to acknowledge him as king.[245] The prince went to Bayonne because he always believed that it was in his interest to do so. He thought, possibly with reason, that only Napoleon could save him from his father and the Prince of Peace.

At Vittoria, on April 13th, 1808, a Spanish minister, M. d'Urquijo, met the young king and his suite on their way to Bayonne. The same day he wrote to the Captain-General La Cuesta '... I said to them (to Ferdinand's ministers) that for Napoleon it was merely a question of abolishing the Bourbon dynasty in Spain in imitation of Louis XIV's example,[246] and of setting up that of France ... The Duke of Infantado, who felt the weight of my remarks, replied: "Is it possible that a hero like Napoleon would besmirch himself by such an action, when the king had placed himself in his hands in all good faith?"'

"'Read Plutarch," I told him, "and you will find that all those heroes of Greece and Rome only won their fame over thousands of dead bodies. All that is now forgotten, while the results remain to be contemplated with respect and astonishment."

"'I added that he should remember the crowns stolen by Charles V of Germany,[247] the cruelties he perpetrated on princes and peoples, and that in spite of it all he was numbered among the heroes. That he should also not forget that we had done as much to the emperors and kings of the Indies ..., that he could apply the same thing to the origins of every dynasty in the world, and that in our own Spain of olden times kings were to be found murdered by usurpers who then placed themselves upon the throne. That in foregoing centuries in our own history there was the murder committed by the bastard Enrique II[248] and the banning of the

245 'Although your representatives constantly refused to recognize him as a legitimate sovereign.' (Conversation by Escoïquiz.)

246 [Louis XIV championed his grandson's claim to the Spanish throne against a Habsburg rival.]

247 [1519–56.]

248 [1369–79.]

family of Henry IV;[249] that the Austrian and Bourbon dynasties were derived from this incest as well as from these crimes ... I said that the language used by the *Moniteur* made it apparent to me that Napoleon did not recognize Ferdinand as king, and said that his father's abdication, which had taken place under arms and in the midst of a popular rising, was null and void, and that Charles IV himself would say so. Also, that without referring to what had happened to Juan I, King of Castile,[250] there were two other examples of abdication in the more modern Austrian and Bourbon dynasties, one by Charles V of Germany, the other by Philip V,[251] and that both these abdications had taken place with great calm and judicious deliberation and even with the help of those who represented the nation.'''[252]

In the conversation with Escoïquiz, which up to the present is the most interesting document on this case, as well as the most authentic because it was published by an enemy, Napoleon observed quite rightly:

'But, after all, the supreme law of rulers, which is that of the good of their states, obliges me to do what I am doing.'

It should be pointed out, to the great surprise of the stupid, that a sovereign, who only exercises a kind of power of attorney, can never act generously or give anything away. We shall meet this problem again in Italy, where people wish that, contrary to what he believed to be the interests of France, Napoleon had made the Italians a present of their complete independence.

Unexpectedly attacked by Spain at a time when she thought him embroiled with Prussia, Napoleon was obliged at Bayonne to treat Spain in a way which he believed to be of greatest advantage to France. If he had been defeated at Jena, would not the Spaniards, led by the Lascys and the Porliers,[253]

249 [King of France 1589–1610.]

250 [1379–90.]

251 [King of Spain 1700–46.]

252 Faithfully copied from the book by M. Escoïquiz. Only books written by the emperor's enemies are quoted here.

253 [Spanish generals in the war against Napoleon.]

have gone to Toulouse and Bordeaux, while the Prussians would have been in Strasbourg and Metz?

Posterity will decide whether it is a crime for the man who rules a nation by power of attorney to take advantage of the extreme stupidity of his enemies. I believe that, unlike our own age, posterity will be more struck by the wrongs meted out to Spain[254] than by the wrongs done to its alleged masters. There is the example of Norway.[255]

The writers of slanders accuse Napoleon of having had too great a contempt for mankind. Here we see him committing a grave error because he had too high an opinion of the Spaniards. He forgot that the proud Castilians, first debased by Charles V of Germany, have, since that famous emperor, been governed by the most cowardly despotism.

Urquijo said in his letter to General La Cuesta:[256]

'Unfortunately, since Charles V, the nation no longer exists, because there is no organized body of men which really represents it, nor any common interest that unites it in a single purpose. This Spain of ours is a Gothic edifice made up of bits and pieces with almost as many privileges, laws, customs and interests as it has provinces. Public spirit does not exist.'

For the past fifteen years, the Spanish monarchy had attained a degree of absurdity unheard of in the annals of the most degenerate courts. An aristocracy of nobles and priests, which alone gives lustre to a monarchy, had allowed itself to be wantonly flouted. A husband and king gave his wife's lover[257] successively:

1 Supreme command over all land and sea forces.

2 The appointing of almost all public offices.

254 [After the restoration of Ferdinand VII in 1814.]

255 [Norway was transferred from Denmark to Sweden by the Congress of Vienna in 1814.]

256 [Fought for Spain against Napoleon.]

257 [Godoy.]

3 The right to declare war or to make peace on his own authority.[258]

Had this favourite been a Richelieu, a Pombal,[259] a Ximenes[260] or a clever rogue, the Spaniards might have been understood. But it so happened that he was the most stupid rascal in Europe. This nation, supposed to be so proud, saw itself ruled despotically by the very object of its contempt. But, setting aside all pride, such general as well as private misfortunes should not have produced so infamous a government! Our French aristocracy as it was before 1789 must have been a republic compared to Spain. And yet Spain rejected a liberal constitution[261] and, furthermore, a constitution guaranteed by the proximity of the legitimate and deposed sovereign![262]

One must be well advanced in years and have as great a contempt for mankind as it deserves to be able to conceive of such conduct. Napoleon, who had lived in Corsica and in France among peoples who were full of vigour and shrewdness was, with regard to the Spaniards, the dupe of his own heart.

Spain, for her part, lost an opportunity which succeeding centuries will not offer her again. Every power has an interest (ill understood to be sure) in seeing its neighbours in a state of weakness and decline. Here, by a unique stroke of luck, the interests of France and of the Peninsula coincided for a time. As an example, Spain could look to Italy, which Napoleon had recreated. Although the Spanish nation is at present quite content upon its own dung-heap, in two hundred years' time perhaps it will have succeeded in obtaining a constitution; though one having no other guarantee than the old rigmarole of oaths, and God only knows at the cost of how much bloodshed it will have to be bought! Whereas, by accepting

258 Conversation published by Escoïquiz.

259 [Enlightened ruling minister in Portugal 1750–77.]

260 [Cardinal and Grand Inquisitor of Spain in the early sixteenth century.]

261 [On his restoration in 1814, petitioned by 69 members of the Cortes, Ferdinand revoked the liberal constitution of 1812 introduced by King Joseph.]

262 [Joseph retired to France in 1813.]

Joseph for king, the Spaniards would have had a kind man, full of learning and devoid of ambition, and who was a born constitutional king. They would then have advanced the happiness of their country by three centuries.

40 COMPARISON BETWEEN NAPOLEON'S TREATMENT OF SPAIN AND NAPOLEON'S TREATMENT BY THE ENGLISH

Let us suppose that Ferdinand VII had given himself up to the emperor, as Napoleon gave himself up to the English at Rochefort.[263] The Spanish prince refused the kingdom of Etruria, and he was conducted to Valençay, a pleasant and healthy spot, while Napoleon, who had appealed to the greatly vaunted generosity of the English people, was imprisoned upon a rock where, by indirect means and avoiding the odium of poison, they seek to do away with him.[264]

I do not say that the English nation is worse than any other; I will only point out that Heaven gave it a most unfortunate opportunity of showing how base it was. What protests were

[263] [After his defeat at Waterloo on 28 June 1815, Napoleon abdicated for the second time and fled to the Atlantic port of Rochefort with thoughts of escaping to America. Here he surrendered to Captain Maitland of HMS *Bellerophon*, who had been sent to prevent his escape and now conveyed him to Torbay and Plymouth. Napoleon sought asylum in England. 'I come,' he wrote to the Prince Regent on 13 July, 'like Themistocles, to sit at the hearth of the British people.' In August he was sent to St Helena.]

[264] [It has been argued that Napoleon died of arsenical poisoning administered by one of his entourage, Count Montholon, at the instance of Count d'Artois or the British government. O'Meara, Napoleon's doctor, diagnosed hepatitis, endemic at St Helena and probably due to the impure water on the island. On his return to England in 1818 he advised the Admiralty that Napoleon's life was endangered. He also hinted that the governor, Lowe (see footnote 266), had orders to hasten Napoleon's death.]

made against this great crime?[265] What generous outburst of feeling by an entire people on hearing of this disgraceful act served to disavow its government in the eyes of other nations? Oh Saint Helena, rock forever famed! You are the reef on which the glory of England was shipwrecked! Setting herself above other peoples by a deceitful hypocrisy, England yet dared to boast of her virtues. This great act has unmasked her; now let her only boast of her victories for so long as she continues to have any. Europe nevertheless remains silent and accuses Napoleon, or at least she appears to listen to those who accuse him. I cannot say what I think. Oh cowardly and jealous men, is it possible to despise you too much? And when one fails to master you, is it not wise to mock you as though you were some loathsome animal?[266]

41 CONVENTION OF BAYONNE; JOSEPH ACKNOWLEDGED KING OF SPAIN; SPANISH WAR

Let us end in a few words this disgusting Spanish business.

In the conversation at Bayonne, Escoïquiz said to Napoleon:

'The unarmed people of Madrid thought they were strong enough to destroy the French army and protect Ferdinand. To such an extent in fact, that insuperable obstacles would have been presented in the event of their having sought to use the only means of placing Ferdinand at liberty.'

Napoleon: 'What then was the only means, Canon?'

Escoïquiz: 'That of having the king flee in secret.'

265 [In fact Napoleon's treatment at St Helena was the subject of a House of Lords debate in March 1817.]

266 See General Bertrand's letter to Sir Hudson Lowe, *Documents Relative to the Prisoner of Saint Helena*, London, 1818. See the hypocritical speech of Lord Bathurst in the *Letters of Dr O'Meara*. [Bertrand, grand marshal of the court, accompanied Napoleon to St Helena. Hudson Lowe was appointed governor of St Helena in 1815 by the colonial secretary, Lord Bathurst, and was knighted in 1817. Gauche, narrow-minded and fearful that Napoleon might escape, Lowe subjected him to a regime of petty restrictions.]

Napoleon: 'And to which part of the world would you have taken him?'

Escoïquiz: 'To Algeciras, where we already had some troops and where we would have been close to Gibraltar.'

Napoleon: 'And afterwards, what would you have done?'

Escoïquiz: 'True to our invariable principle of preserving a close and at the same time an honourable alliance with Your Majesty, we would have proposed peremptorily to continue it on condition that our frontiers were restored to us without delay, and that the French troops left Spain. In the event of Your Majesty refusing to agree to these proposals, we would have made war upon you with all our might and to the very end. Such would have been my opinion, Sire, in the event of our having by one means or another known your real intentions!'

Napoleon: 'You reason extremely well. That was quite the best you could have done.'[267]

The ill-informed will exclaim: 'With regard to Spain you praise Napoleon as though he had been a Washington.'

To which I would reply: 'Spain had the most fortunate opportunity to be granted to a nation that was profoundly corrupt and therefore in no state to bestow freedom upon itself. To have given the Spain of 1808 a government similar to that of the United States would have seemed to the Spaniards, who are the most inconsequential of men, like a harsh and painful tyranny. The experience of Joseph and Joachim at Naples[268] sheds light on the question. They were kings with nearly all the absurd trappings of the trade, yet they were moderate and reasonable. That was enough, in those countries, to speed the advance of happiness and justice, and to begin to make work respected. It should be pointed out that the painful sensations an individual feels when breaking himself of bad habits are also felt by a nation. Liberty needs to be handled carefully during the early years, and to the stupid

[267] 5 July 1818.

[268] [Joseph Bonaparte was King of Naples 1805–8 before becoming King of Spain. His successor in Naples 1808–15 was Joachim Murat.]

such constraint disguises the benefits to be derived from new institutions.

Therefore, in the case of Spain, Napoleon was better than Washington. What he lacked in generosity, he made up in vigour. There was one fact, obvious even to people who never perceive moral factors: the population of Spain, which was only eight million when Philip II entered it, was increased to twelve million by the small amount of French common sense introduced by the kings of that nation. Spain, which is larger than France, should be more fertile on account of her sun, while she enjoys almost all the advantages of an island. What, therefore, is the secret force which hinders the birth of fourteen million men? To which it will be replied: 'The lack of cultivated land.' And for my part I would say: 'What unknown poison prevents the land from being cultivated?'

After the cession of Spain by the princes of a dynasty which war had placed upon the throne ninety years before,[269] Napoleon wished to convene an assembly, to have it recognize his rights and to draw up a constitution, and by means of the weight and prestige of his authority, to set the new machine in motion.

Of all European countries Spain was perhaps the one in which Napoleon was most admired. Compare his methods with those of Louis XIV in 1713. Above all consult the correspondence of the lesser people of both periods: ministers, marshals, generals, etc. ...[270] You will be forced to admit that envy is the main reason for the success of Mme de Staël and the present-day authors of libels, and for the dangers and the ridicule which the common herd lavish on those who defend the prisoner of Saint Helena.

So that the rights of the new king should derive from the rights of the people, Napoleon sought at Bayonne to form a convention[271] of 150 members drawn from among the various bodies constituting the monarchy. The majority of deputies

269 [The Bourbon dynasty was established in Spain by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, following the War of the Spanish Succession.]

270 See Saint-Simon, le Marquis de Saint-Philippe, *Memoirs of Marshal de ...*

271 [Napoleon convened a national junta in June 1808.]

were nominated by the provinces, towns and corporations. The others were appointed by the French general in command at Madrid (Murat, Grand-Duke of Berg). In all this, as in every revolution, there was nothing wholly legal, because how could the political customs of a people, which are still called its constitution, furnish rules on which to base a change of dynasty? That is an implied contradiction. Everything was affected by the troubled and swift-moving events, but, all in all, the true principles were faithfully observed. For example, who had the right to nominate the representatives from South America? They took what they found from among the most outstanding South Americans living in Madrid, and the choices made were excellent. For the South Americans were less oppressed by preconceived ideas than the Spaniards.

The junta began its sittings on June 15th, 1808.[272] It consisted of 75 members, later increased to 90. This meeting had been preceded by a decree issued by Napoleon which stated that following representations by the leading authorities in Spain, he had decided, so as to put an end to the interregnum, to proclaim his brother Joseph King of Spain and the Spanish Indies, and to guarantee the independence and integrity of the monarchy in the four corners of the earth.[273]

Joseph reached Bayonne on June 7th. He left regretfully the voluptuous life which he had created for himself at Naples. As fine a man as Philip V, he was no more of a general than that prince had been.

The deputies assembled at Bayonne recognized Joseph as king on the evening of June 7th. As the speech of the Duke of Infantado failed to express definite recognition, Napoleon exclaimed:

'There must be no equivocation, Monsieur. You must recognize him unreservedly or else refuse in the same way. One must be as great in sin as in virtue. Do you wish to return to Spain and place yourself at the head of the insurgents? I give you my word that I will have you conducted back there in safety, but I can assure you that you

[272] 5 July 1818 [That is, Stendhal wrote this passage on this date.]. Corrected on 14 August.

[273] The *Moniteur* of 18 June 1808.

will behave in such a manner as to get yourself shot within a week ... no, within twenty-four hours.'[274]

Napoleon was too clever and too generous to carry out this threat. In the language of the French army, it was known as *bluffing*, which means to confuse a weak character.

After twelve sessions the convention finished its work on July 7th. It had drawn up a constitution for Spain. The draft of this constitution had been sent from Bayonne to the governing junta at Madrid. Sent back to Bayonne, the act was further increased by a considerable number of new articles, since from the 80 it had contained at Madrid, it finally reached 150.

In the first place, in accordance with established principles, it will be seen that the convention had been charged with drawing up a constitution while remaining absolutely separate from the ruling executive. It was the lack of this precaution which was the ruin of France in 1792.

The members of the Bayonne convention had no taste for martyrdom, as we saw from their speeches to King Joseph. Nevertheless they proceeded with a delicacy which appeared to promise considerable freedom. Considering themselves to be no longer competent to order the expulsion of one dynasty and the declaration of another, they never even discussed this essential matter.

The deputies agreed in admitting that no restrictions had been placed upon the freedom of their debates. The obstinacy with which the Spanish grandees maintained the illiberal right to form large entailed properties shows to what extent they believed in the stability of the new order. There were lively discussions on religious tolerance, so unusual a word in Spain, and upon the instituting of trial by jury.

What was the behaviour of the despot during these discussions? He appeared as though he never for one moment failed to realize the inadequacy of this representation for sanctioning so great a change. He always went on the principle *that acceptance by the nation* would replace the

274 See the speech of the Duke of Infantado in the *Moniteur* of 18 June. The duke's forbears, Castilian heroes, would have had some difficulty in recognizing themselves in it.

formalities which circumstances had made it impossible to fulfil.

That part of the constitution which concerned South America was fairly liberal and calculated to maintain for some time the progress which that splendid part of the world has since made towards independence. These articles of the constitution had been drawn up by a young Mexican canon, El Moral, a man of great intelligence, learning and love of his country. Generally speaking, whatever is good in Spain is excellent, but in no nation are enlightened minds in a smaller proportion. The more the body of a nation is behind the times, the more superiority and true greatness are to be found among the fifteen or twenty thousand patriots isolated in the midst of the riff-raff, and whose fame and misfortunes echo throughout Europe. I never meet one of these noble victims without being amazed at the prodigious effort his mind must have made to raise itself above the thoughtlessness and false values[275] which have blunted the indomitable courage of the rest of the nation, to its own detriment. Men such as Agustín Arguellès, El Moral, Porlier and Llorente[276] show Europe what Spain will become ten years after she has wrested from her kings a two-chamber government and put an end to the Inquisition.[277]

Joseph and the convention left Bayonne on July 7th. If what had just happened had been judged solely by the retinue surrounding him, no one would have had an inkling of the amazing change which had just taken place. Joseph showed himself to the Spaniards amongst the same ministers and officers who had waited upon their former masters. Of all who had lived at the Bourbon court, only the king was changed. After that let it be said that the nobility are the support of

[275] The operation of false ethics, which are the fruits of popery, is very well developed in Vol. XVI of Sismondi's *History of Italy*.

[276] [Liberal constitutionalists in the reign of Joseph Bonaparte, they fell victim to reaction on the restoration of Ferdinand VII. Arguellès and Llorente were exiled. Porlier was executed after attempting to depose Ferdinand.]

[277] [The Inquisition, abolished by King Joseph in 1808, was reintroduced by Ferdinand VII in 1814. It was permanently abolished in 1820.]

kings! On the contrary, it is the nobility which make royalty odious.

Joseph arrived in a country of less than twelve million inhabitants, whose army had been carefully discredited, set aside or relegated to parts of the country remote from the monarchy.

For 150 years the country had languished under the rule of a government that was hated and, even more, despised. State revenues, which had been handled with the same ineptitude as everything else, and squandered to boot, were in extreme disorder. And how were finances to be restored in a country where work was considered a disgrace? In the more enlightened provinces, the people themselves had felt that it was imperative to change their king, and had looked to Archduke Charles.[278] How fortunate Spain and South America would have been if they had followed this idea! They would now be enjoying the happiness which a wise and honest administration always confers, and with a foreign policy having nothing romantic about it. It is a far cry from the present state of Spain to that of the subjects of the House of Austria!

Joseph made the same mistake as his brother. He did not despise the rabble sufficiently. He thought that to give the Spaniards equality and all the freedom they could conceive would make them his friends. Far from this being the case, the Spaniards were offended that the 80,000 men sent to Spain were not picked troops; they saw in this a sign of contempt. From that moment all was lost. How, indeed, was one to handle people who were ignorant, fanatical and abstemious in the midst of plenty, and who took as much pride in their privations as other people took in their pleasures?

The Spaniard is not covetous, he is even devoid of this source of activity. He saves without being miserly. He does not want to have gold as a miser does, but he does not know what to do with his wealth. He spends his days, lazy and sad, nursing his pride in the depths of a magnificent apartment. Blood, customs, speech, way of life and way of fighting, all these in Spain are Moorish. Were he Mohammedan, the Spaniard

278 [Of Austria.] The *Moniteur* of 22 June 1808.

would be a complete Moor. He is consumed by the same fires, with a similar retiring disposition, a similar sobriety, a similar taste for meditation and silence. Ferocious yet generous at one and the same time, hospitable yet unrelenting, lazy yet tireless once on the move, burned by his sun and his superstitious beliefs, the Spaniard offers all the freakish characteristics of an irascible temperament carried to extremes.[279]

Moreover, like the Hebrews, he never goes outside his own house and from national prejudice remains aloof from contact with the other nations which surround it. A Spaniard's travels were limited to America, where he found a despotism even more degrading than that of the Peninsula. The Spaniard is not to be found in Europe. There are never any Spanish deserters, artists or traders. He is little known, and for his part he does not seek to know. The Spaniard possesses only one quality – he knows how to admire.

At Bayonne, people were in general much struck by the lack of knowledge which people attached to the Spanish court displayed with regard to France. They had no knowledge of either men or events. They exhibited the curiosity of savages for the most famous generals of the French army.

The Spaniard, like the Turk whom he so strongly resembles in religion, does not leave his country to make war on other nations, but as soon as anyone sets foot in his country, everyone is the enemy of the invader. The people do not think, as do the Germans, that it is the soldiers' business to defend them.

They have so much national pride, they are so patriotic in Spain, that even the priests are patriots. Today half the generals who are fighting for freedom in South America have risen from the priest class. That is yet another point of similarity with the Turks.

The specific character of the priests is perhaps the main characteristic which divides Spain from the rest of Europe.

The clergy in Spain is *resident*. Moreover they are the only great landowners who live among the people. The others live in Madrid or in the provincial capitals. From this is derived

[279] This rather lacks order or relevance. 14 August 1818.

the old saying which means to do something impossible: *to build castles in Spain*. This constant presence of the priests among the people, this continual restitution in the very place it was grown of the fruits of endeavour, is bound to give them an influence in which the absentee landlords, the nobles, can have no part. If the Spaniard listens to his priest as his superior in knowledge, he loves him as an equal in love of country. Priests detest liberal ideas. It is impossible to foresee how Spain will resolve this problem. It is a vicious circle perhaps destined to give future generations the useful and necessary spectacle of absolute monarchy.[280]

Spain had been afire for six months, yet Napoleon still believed that the blessings of representative government would win him all hearts. He knew that of all European peoples, it was the one country that had carried admiration for his great achievements the farthest. Italians and Spaniards, having nothing frivolous in their character and being devoured by passion and suspicion, are the best judges of greatness in national leaders.

Had Bonaparte hanged the Prince of Peace, sent Ferdinand VII back to Spain with the Bayonne constitution and one of his nieces for wife, kept a garrison of 80,000 men and made a clever man ambassador, he would have obtained from Spain all the ships and soldiers she could have provided. Who can assess the degree of adoration to which a nation might surrender when with them adulatory praise becomes a paean and admiration turns to ecstasy?

There is no doubt that Napoleon was drawn by the example of Louis XIV. Once he had been aroused at Jena, he wanted to do as much as that great king had done. He changed the king of precisely the one nation to which such a measure was unsuited. The ceaselessly renewed threats of M. de Talleyrand[281] also played a great part in his decision.

[280] Despotism tempered by an aristocracy of both nobles and priests, i.e. three powers conspiring against the useful and productive citizen, and plundering him at will.

[281] [Talleyrand's warnings of the need to remove the Spanish Bourbons.]

At that very moment when Joseph was making his entry into Spain[282] and when Napoleon was returning in triumph to Paris with his remorse and his false ideas, Spain had already risen. While the Council of Castile ordered a levy of 300,000 men, a great many parishes had already revolted of their own accord. There was not a village which did not possess its junta. Spain suddenly offered a spectacle similar to that of France when in 1793 she was covered with organized bodies of men deliberating upon the danger to which the country was exposed. At Seville, Badajoz and Oviedo, the uprising began at the news of the events which had taken place in Madrid on May 2nd. The whole of the Asturias rose up on learning of the change of dynasty. The mob began by making a horrible series of attacks on all those whom it considered, in its rage, to be friends of France or lukewarm in the country's cause. The most important people were put to death. This resulted in a general *Terror* and in the need for all who governed to carry out unhesitatingly the will of the people. By means of the *Terror* Spain gained her armies.

As soon as an army had been defeated, it hanged its general. The Spaniards were a brave and religious people, but not military-minded. On the contrary, it was customary for them to detest or to despise everything to do with soldiers. This was a complete contrast to Germany. They looked upon the war as a religious crusade against the French. A red ribbon bearing the inscription *Vincer o morir pro patria et pro Ferdinando VII* [283] was the only military insignia worn by most of the soldiers.

The first battle which took place between these fanatics and the French left 27,000 dead in the fields of the Río Seco.[284] Women threw themselves on our wounded with terrible cries and fought each other to be allowed to finish them off by the most cruel tortures. They thrust knives and scissors into their eyes and gloated with savage joy on their blood and convulsions.[285]

[282] 10 July [1808.]

[283] [To conquer or die for the fatherland and Ferdinand VII.]

[284] [French victory, 14 July 1808.]

[285] *Memoirs* of Rocca, p. 190.

Napoleon received news at Bordeaux of the battle of Bailen,[286] where Castaños and Reding[287] forced General Dupont to lay down his arms. It was his first setback, and he was in despair. Neither Russia nor Waterloo affected in such a way this proud man.

'To steal holy vessels,' he cried in his rage, 'is understandable in an ill-disciplined army, but to sign one's theft is not!'

Then a moment later:

'I know my Frenchmen. They should have been told "Every man for himself!", and by the end of three weeks they would all have returned to me.'

He appealed to those present:

'Is there not a law in any code to allow those abominable generals to be shot?'

42 *SPANISH WAR (CONTINUED)*[288]

Napoleon returned to Paris, but soon had to leave again for Spain. We shall, as usual, leave aside the general history of the war, which requires extensive detail. He reviewed troops at the gates of Madrid on several occasions. As was his custom, he found himself in the middle of a crowd of people and, upon one occasion even, in the midst of a large column of Spanish prisoners. Ragged and sunburned, these defeated fanatics had horrible faces.

M. de Saint-Simon, a Spanish grandee and a former member of the Constituent Assembly, had fought in Madrid against the French. Napoleon pursued a definite policy in respect of Frenchmen who bore arms against their country. Saint-Simon was arrested and condemned to death by a military commission. The emperor could have had no feeling of hatred towards a man whom he did not know and who did not figure among those persons who were known to be

286 [21 July 1808.]

287 [Reding was a Swiss general in the Spanish service.]

288 Corrected on 14 and 17 August 1818.

dangerous. Policy alone had singled out the victim. Saint-Simon had a daughter who eased his exile and the troubles of his old age by her tender care. The danger to her father brought her to the feet of Napoleon. All preparations for carrying out the sentence had been made, but the devotion of this dutiful daughter prevailed over a set course of action which had seemed irrevocable, for it was based not on passion but on reason and on recollections of Saint Jean d'Acre.[289] This noble act of clemency was made easier by the chief-of-staff[290] and by Generals Sebastiani and Laubardière.

The whole army thought the Spanish war unjust. It had not yet been irritated by numerous acts of treachery.[291] During the retreat from Oporto in 1809, a crowded French hospital was massacred in horrible circumstances. At Coïmbra,[292] several thousand sick and wounded were also despatched in a manner too atrocious to be related. Elsewhere seven hundred French prisoners were callously drowned in the Minho. There were hundreds of such incidents, in which people whom one is still kind enough to admire were implicated. Little by little these atrocities irritated the French army, and it became cruel, although never as a matter of principle. All who were called rebels were shot or hanged.

Whilst engaged in his Spanish campaign, Napoleon learned that Austria, who had been arming for a long time, was about to attack him. It became necessary to entrust Spain or France and Italy to his lieutenants. He could not afford to hesitate. This was a mistake he could not avoid, but from that moment Spain was lost. The army, which ceased to be the *Grande Armée*, and was no longer blessed by the actual presence of the despot, grew daily more slack. From that moment, no matter how brave the action, there ceased to be either reward or promotion for the army of Spain.

289 [This refers to the poisoning of the plague-stricken French troops during the siege of Acre, 1799. See chapter 13.]

290 [Marshal Jourdan.]

291 'It was our maxim that to mislead cleverly, without completely disguising the truth, a man as insincere as Napoleon, was an action which merited praise more than blame.' Escoïquiz, p. 124.

292 [October 1810.]

To make the position still more unbearable, the very obvious split between Joseph and Napoleon grew more and more embittered. In the beginning there had been two main reasons for this division: the way in which Napoleon left Joseph in the lurch and the insolence of the marshals towards him and, second, Napoleon's new plans for Spain.

Joseph maintained that since he had been made a king, he should seem like one. To relegate him to the rear of the army was not the way to prepare him to become leader of the nation, and the prouder the country, the more it would wish her representative to be honoured. Louis XIV, who understood vanity, would not have made such a mistake.

All the money brought back from Prussia, some one hundred millions, did not appear to be sufficient for the Spanish war. Accustomed to feeding one war with another, Napoleon could not get used to taking his own money into Spain. He wanted Joseph to pay for the war. Spain could have provided barely sufficient money in time of peace. It was supremely absurd to expect such a thing at a time when French troops were definitely masters solely of that territory which they had occupied militarily, and which they had drained dry.

But there was something else. No sooner had Napoleon set foot in Spain than he found beautiful what he saw and wished to have a part of it. Nothing was more opposed to the transactions of Bayonne. This quick-minded and intense genius, momentarily satisfied at the time of creation, constantly perceived fresh connections between things. The new idea of each day supplanted that of the previous evening, and as he felt himself to be strong enough to overcome all obstacles, nothing was immutable to a mind before which the bounds of the possible receded as the horizon before the traveller. Napoleon has often been thought treacherous when he was merely changeable.[293] This was the frame of mind which made him, of all European princes, the least suited to a constitutional form of government.

At first, quite sincerely, he had yielded Spain to Joseph. Certainly at Bayonne he had not dreamed of appropriating a

293 [In the *Mémorial de Sainte Hélène,* Napoleon made the same observation.]

single one of his provinces. On his return from Benavente, where he had pursued the English despite all the obstacles presented by snow, winter and mountains, he stopped at Valladolid, where he impatiently awaited the delegation from Madrid.

He sent for one of his courtiers who had travelled with the representatives. He was eager to set out for France. It was night and the weather was dreadful. Every minute or so he opened the window to see the state of the sky and to ascertain the possibility of setting forth. Turning towards the members of his court, he asked question after question in his usual fashion, and inquired sharply what would happen at Madrid, what did the Spaniards want? He was told that they were discontented, whereupon he set out to prove that this was wrong, that discontent was an impossibility, that a nation always understood its own interests correctly, and that the Spaniards had to win the battle of tithes, equality, feudal rights and the lessening of the clerical hydra. He was told that in the first place the Spaniard, knowing nothing of the state of Europe, was blind to these benefits, and on the contrary he took pride in owing nothing to anyone, and that finally, as a race, the Spanish were like Sganarelle's wife[294] who wanted to be beaten. Napoleon laughed and continued speaking vehemently while striding about the room.

'I did not know Spain; it is a more beautiful country than I had thought. I have made my brother a fine present of it. But you will see, the Spaniards will act stupidly, and the country will revert to me. Then I will divide it into five large viceroyalties.'

He was struck by the way Spain leaned towards an alliance with England. He did not count on the Napoleonic Spanish kings any more than upon the Bourbon Spanish kings. He felt that one as much as the other would take advantage of the first opportunity to gain their independence just as the kings of Holland and of Naples[295] tried to do.

He left Valladolid the day after this extraordinary revelation.

294 [From Molière's comedy *Sganarelle*.]

295 [Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland 1806–10, and Joachim Murat, King of Naples 1808–15.]

After several hours' hard riding he covered the thirty leagues which separate that town from Burgos. Four days later he was in Paris.[296] The speed at which he travelled, his aptitude for braving every kind of fatigue, were part of the magic of his being; and everyone, down to the most insignificant postillion, felt that he was a man above other men.[297]

43 TRANSITION

Let us pause for a moment to penetrate within the palace of the Tuileries where the fate of all Europe was decided.[298]

The Spanish war marks the decline both of Napoleon's power and of his genius. Prosperity had gradually altered and

296 [January 1810.]

297 The summing up, full of facts, would only take one page (pp. 226ff., from de Pradt), but it would be offputting. Keep it for somewhere else. Napoleon's character provides me with an excellent transition of ideas if not of words. 10 July 1818.

298 [Among Stendhal's notes in the Grenoble Public Library is the following portrait of Napoleon, entitled 'written in 1815 and approved in 1817': 'No-one thinks of telling a runner who has covered thirty leagues on a burning hot day and has failed to reach his goal through being unable to make the last mile: "You walk like a tortoise!" That is what everyone complains of in Napoleon. Does moral fatigue count for nothing, then? The answer is that the common herd does not appreciate what moral means. Adding up all the decrees signed by Napoleon every day of his life from 19th Brumaire to 11 April 1814 makes a daily total of 31 or 32, not counting the founding of hospitals. He signed 20 or 30 reports a day. The decrees had 10 or 12 clauses; the reports were 5 or 6 pages long. A given report had 80 clauses and would be submitted to him four times before he would sign it. A man who merely registered the decrees in the state secretariat was worn out at the end of the day; and this went on for 13 years in succession. He did light work only when he was with the army. Sometimes, despite cups of coffee and a good gallop, he was all in; when that happened he forced himself to carry on: that was the way he was. Had he had any *self-doubt*, had he been able to hesitate, to ask for advice on Spain, for example, or about leaving Moscow earlier, he could not have had that *inflexible willpower* that can only come from extreme self-confidence. He would have had doubts about what he was doing. When will men learn to understand that a bottle cannot be full of champagne and ordinary wine simultaneously? A choice must be made.']

vitiated his character. He made the mistake of being too surprised by his success and of not sufficiently despising the kings, his colleagues.[299] He drank great gulps of the poison of flattery. He believed that nothing was personally impossible for him. He could no longer stand contradiction, and soon the slightest remark appeared to him an impertinence and, what was more, stupid. As a result of his bad choice of men, he was used to seeing only those things succeed which he did himself. Soon his ministers had to appear to do no more than slavishly set down his ideas. Men of genuine ability drew away from him, or pretended to have ceased to think, and laughed at him in secret.[300] It is impossible, in this age, for genuine ability not to be allied to fairly liberal ideas. Napoleon himself is an example of this, and it is considered the greatest crime of all.

44 THE GOVERNMENT[301]

The emperor had twelve ministers[302] and over forty state councillors, who sent him reports on matters which he referred to them. The ministers and the administrative heads of departments issued orders to the one hundred and twenty prefects.[303] Four or five times every week each minister laid

[299] Careful. 'Despising his enemies'. [Note by Stendhal.] The material in chapter 35 should be inserted here. [Note by Vismara.] No. [Note by Stendhal.]

[300] Count Réal, for example. [Councillor of state who opposed the introduction of the Legion of Honour.]

[301] This is rather confused up to the chapter on the Council of State. I think a really clear idea should be given of the machinery of direction and the machinery of execution, so one entry on the prefects, one on the mayors, etc. [Note by Vismara.]

[302] In 1810 the Dukes of Massa [Régnier, minister of justice], of Cadore [Champagny, minister of foreign affairs], of Feltre [Henri Clarke, minister of war], of Gaëta [Gaudin, minister of finance], of Otranto [Fouché, minister of police], Montalivet [minister of the interior], Mollien [minister of the treasury], Cessac, Decrès, Bigot-Préameneux and the Duke of Bassano [Maret, secretary of state.] Later the minister of trade, Sussy.

[303] [Each department was administered by a prefect.]

before Napoleon sixty or eighty draft decrees. Each draft was amplified in a report which the minister read to the emperor. On matters of less importance the emperor initialled his approval in the margin of the report.

The ministers left all signed decrees with the Duke of Bassano,[304] who kept the originals and sent the ministers certified copies bearing his signature.

When the emperor was with the army or travelling, the ministers, who did not accompany him, sent their portfolios to the Duke of Bassano, who then laid the decrees before His Majesty and read the reports to him. This reveals the origin of the influence enjoyed by the duke, who in the beginning was only a mere secretary, who gradually managed to place his name at the end of those of the ministers in the Imperial Almanack, although he was never granted a ministry.[305]

The all-powerful influence of the Duke of Bassano made itself felt over the ministers and prefects whom he frightened. No one had any influence over Napoleon on matters which he could understand. Therefore all decrees appertaining to organization, everything belonging to the domain of pure reason, if I may put it thus, proclaimed an outstanding genius. Whenever there were particulars that needed to be known, if the minister of the department concerned was in agreement with the secretary of state,[306] Napoleon was misled during the preliminary exposé of the matter, and pride or laziness caused him never to return to the subject.[307]

As for decrees concerning personnel, Napoleon had adopted certain general rules based on a supreme contempt for mankind. He seemed to think:

'As for people I do not know, I will be less likely to be misled by their uniform, which in my eyes places them in a certain class, than by the ministers.'

304 [Maret, chief of Napoleon's personal secretariat.]

305 [In fact, Maret was minister of foreign affairs from 1811 to 1813.]

306 [Maret.]

307 All this is good, but rather confused. [Note by Vismara.]

Each day saw him make the most absurd choices. Through seeking to inculcate respect in a witty and derisive people, he had suppressed conversation. His only means of knowing the people he employed was through their striking successes, or through his ministers' reports. On leaving Holland after a trip he had made there, he said with disarming naiveté:

'We are ill provided with prefects in this country!'

45 THE DUKE OF BASSANO[308]

Thirteen and a half years of success turned Alexander the Great into a kind of madman. Good fortune of exactly the same duration produced the same madness in Napoleon. The only difference was that the Macedonian hero was lucky enough to die. What fame Napoleon the Conqueror would have left behind had a cannon-ball struck him on the evening of the battle of Borodino![309]

England and English writers could have prevented the madness of the modern hero. He was unlucky in being obeyed too well in his rage against the English press. Today this abhorred enemy is his only consolation.[310]

In 1808, due to the changes which eight years of unhindered arrogance and *crownomania* had effected in Napoleon's genius, it transpired that out of his twelve ministers, at least eight were mediocre men having no other merit than that of killing themselves with work.

The Duke of Bassano, who enjoyed the greatest influence in non-military matters and who was a pleasant and inoffensive man in the drawing room, was, in government, the most hopeless mediocrity. Not only was he devoid of any high aims, but he did not understand them. Everything that passed

308 This chapter is all about the Duke of Bassano, and yet the Duke of Bassano is also discussed in the others. [Note by Vismara.]

309 [7 September 1812. At St Helena Napoleon observed that he should have died at Borodino.]

310 [At St Helena Napoleon subscribed to Whig newspapers, such as the *Morning Chronicle*, sympathetic to his cause.]

through his mind was diminished. He barely possessed the ability of a journalist, in which profession he had begun his career in Paris. Because of his position he had to be with the master night and day. A man of character would have taken offence at the fits of temper and at the emperor's impatience, and however much of a courtier he might have been, his expression would have annoyed the monarch.

The Duke of Bassano chose all the prefects of France and expected no more of them than an ability to pluck a chicken without making it squawk. These unfortunate men, who were filled with vanity, killed themselves with work and let their salaries be engulfed in an insane official display. Each morning, on opening their *Moniteur,* they quaked for fear that they would find that they had been dismissed.[311] One of their principal means of currying favour was to eradicate the last spark of public spirit, which, then as now, was known as Jacobinism.

46 THE GOVERNMENT (CONTINUED)

In 1811 a small rural community wished, for the sum of sixty francs, to use some sub-standard paving stones which had been rejected by the engineer in charge of laying the main road. This required fourteen decisions by the prefect, the sub-prefect, the engineer and the minister. After incredible difficulties and extensive activity the required authorization finally arrived, eleven months after the request had been made, and it transpired that the defective paving stones had been used by the roadworkers to fill up a hole in the road. A clerk, naturally ignorant of the matter, and kept at great expense in a corner of some ministry in Paris, two hundred leagues from the parish in question, had decided a matter which three representatives from the village could very well have settled in a couple of hours. Such an obvious fact as this could not pass unnoticed, and it was one which occurred five hundred times a day.[312]

311 [In fact prefects were seldom dismissed.]

312 An excellent passage to include in the chapter on the mayors and municipalities. [Note by Vismara.]

But the main idea was to humble the citizen and above all to prevent him from *political discussion,* an abominable habit contracted by the French in the days of Jacobinism.[313] Without such jealous precautions, that other monster to which I have already referred, abhorred by all the successive French governments which have exploited France, might have reappeared – and by this I mean *public opinion*.

It is clear from whence sprang the enormous amount of work which killed the emperor's ministers. Paris wished to *digest* for the whole of France. Every piece of business in France had to be handled by people who necessarily knew little about it, even if they had been geniuses.[314]

For the very life of a clerk tends necessarily to stupefy him.[315] When he starts in an office, his primary occupation is to write a good hand and to know how to use the pounce-box.[316] All the rest of his career tends to make him take the shadow for the substance. Should he succeed in acquiring an air of some importance, he has nothing further to desire. All his interests prompt him to favour the man who speaks without having seen. Both spectator and victim of the most sordid intrigues, the clerk combines the vices of a courtier with all the bad habits of the poverty in which he vegetates for two-thirds of his life. Such were the people to whom the emperor had thrown France, yet he could despise them. The emperor wanted France to be administered by clerks who earned 1,200 francs a year. The clerk drafted the plan, and the pride of the minister saw that it was passed.

Something which depicts the period are the accounts of the paper manufacturers who supplied each ministry. These are almost unbelievable. At least as incredible is the amount of useless and therefore bad work done by those unfortunate

[313] 31 December 1817. The present government is as tyrannical as can be.

[314] Some foreigners may have pleasure in recalling the way in which a decree or law was put into practice. (Twenty lines explaining the functioning of the administration.)

[315] Insert a passage to give an idea of the inside of the ministry. [Note by Vismara.]

[316] [A box containing powder for blotting.]

ministers and unhappy prefects. For instance, one of the prefects' most important tasks was to write out all the reports in their own hand, and even the different copies of each report, for the various ministries.[317] And the more work they did of this kind, the worse the state of the department. The best-run department in France was that of Mainz, whose prefect, Jean Debry,[318] openly made fun of ministerial bureaucracy.[319]

47 THE GOVERNMENT (CONTINUED)

What then were the merits of this imperial administration so missed in France, as well as by Belgium, Piedmont, the Roman States and Florence?

They consisted of general rules and basic laws dictated by the soundest reasoning. All the abuses which had accumulated in the administration of every country after two or three centuries of aristocratic rule and the shrewd use of power were completely abolished. The general rules of the French administration protected only two things: work and property. That was enough to ensure the regime's popularity. Furthermore, the ministerial decisions which came from Paris after a delay of six months, even though they were frequently absurd due to ignorance of the facts, were always impartial.

There is a certain country, which shall remain nameless, where the most insignificant justice of the peace cannot issue a summons without committing a flagrant injustice to the advantage of the rich against the poor.[320] This regime was only interrupted during the period of French rule. Any man who wished to work could be certain of making his fortune. There were crowds of buyers for every article. Justice and

317 Apollinaire and Finot. Montalivet's handwriting, which he seems to recognize.

318 [Debry was in fact prefect of the department of the Doubs; Jeanbon-Saint-André was prefect of Mainz.]

319 A passage for the chapter on the prefects. [Note by Vismara.]

320 *Consultations* by M. Dalpozzo, Italy, 1817.

labour were respected, and made up for conscription and indirect taxation.

The emperor's Council of State felt quite rightly that the only rational system was for each department to pay its own prefect, clergy, judges and for its departmental and municipal roads, and to remit to Paris only what was necessary for the sovereign, the armies, the ministers and public expenditure in general.[321]

This very simple system was the pet aversion of the ministers. The emperor would no longer have been able to cheat the local communes, which in France is one of the sovereign's great pleasures.[322] When the nation is no longer duped by fine phrases,[323] this system will be accepted, and then even the king will only be able to choose the prefects and mayors of the large towns from among a certain number of candidates nominated by them.[324] And the smaller towns will nominate their own mayor for a period of one year. Until then, there will be no true freedom and no genuine school for Members of Parliament. The finest elements in our legislative assemblies have been provincial administrators nominated by the people.

[321] Lickspittles added to the Council of State: Chauvelin, Fréville and de Néville.

[322] People were amazed to see the Duke of Choiseul [minister under Louis XV] hold out for so long against Mme Dubarry [the king's mistress]. At a time when he appeared to be most insecure, he found work with Louis XV and he asked him for orders relating to the five or six millions he had saved in the war department, pointing out that it would not be appropriate to pay them into the royal treasury. The king understood what that meant and replied: 'Speak to Bertin [a minister], give him three millions in kind, and I will make you a present of the remainder.' The king was not sure that a successor would offer him the same facilities.

[323] That is to say, when it has freedom of the press.

[324] By people paying a hundred francs in taxes.

Instead of having matters dealt with by clerks, they will be handled by wealthy citizens to whom, as with hospital governors, the honour of the position will be sufficient payment. But all this frustrates a phrase-mongering government and bureaucracy. In short, the deadly influence of a self-seeking city like Paris.[325]

48 ON THE MINISTERS

Whilst on the throne Napoleon was unfortunate in that he shared three weaknesses with Louis XIV. He delighted to an almost childish degree in court display. He appointed fools as ministers, and although he did not believe that he could shape them, as Louis XIV said of Chamillard,[326] he thought that no matter how stupid their reports, he would be able to sort out the heart of the matter.[327] In short, Louis XIV feared men of talent; Napoleon disliked them. He acted on the principle that in France there would never be a strong party other than the Jacobins.

He dismissed men like Lucien and Carnot: men of superior ability who possessed just the gifts in which he himself was lacking. He appeared to like or to tolerate Duroc, the Prince of

[325] All the petty men of letters who degrade literature and are used by the victorious party to defame the defeated one, and to extol its own insolence, live by office work. See the biographies of Michaud (Villemain, Auger, Roger). [All three became members of the Académie française under the Restoration. Villemain became professor of French literature at the Sorbonne. Roger was a playwright. Auger, a Home Office official under Napoleon, became a notorious ultra-royalist. In 1825 Stendhal was to respond to Auger's speech in the Académie in defence of Classicism with his manifesto on Romanticism, *Racine and Shakespeare*.]

[326] [Minister of war.]

[327] I think one can draw a distinction: Napoleon disliked men of talent who rivalled or outshone him in war; other men of talent he encouraged. [Note by Vismara.]

Neuchâtel,[328] the Duke of Massa,[329] the Duke of Feltre,[330] the Duke of Bassano,[331] the Duke of Abrantès,[332] Marmont, the Count of Montesquiou, the Count of Cessac, etc., etc., all of them perfectly honest and very worthy men among their contemporaries, but whom a shrewd public has always persisted in finding rather inept.

When the poisonous air of the court had completely corrupted Napoleon and magnified his self-esteem to an unhealthy extent, he dismissed Talleyrand and Fouché and replaced them by the most narrow-minded of his sycophants (Savary and Bassano).[333]

The emperor reached the point of being able to deal with the most complicated matters in twenty minutes. He could be seen making incredible efforts of concentration, impossible to any other man, so as to understand a prolix and disordered report, in short, a report written by a fool who did not understand the subject himself.

He said of the Count of C[essac], one of his ministers: 'He's an old woman', and he kept him.

'I am not a Louis XV', he told his ministers assembled in council on his return from one of his journeys. 'I do not change ministers every six months.'

He then went on to tell them all the faults with which the public reproached them. He thought he knew everything about everything and only needed secretaries to edit his thoughts. This might be the case with the leader of a republic, where public affairs benefit from the intelligence of the most insignificant citizen, but not in the case of a despotic leader who cannot endure the existence of any corporate body or of any regulation!

328 [Berthier.]

329 [Régnier.]

330 [Marshal Henri Clarke.]

331 [Maret.]

332 [General Junot.]

333 [Savary replaced Fouché as minister of police in 1810; Maret, Duke of Bassano, replaced Talleyrand as foreign minister in 1811.]

The Duke of Bassano's greatest success came from having guessed the emperor's thoughts on a certain matter, even before the latter had communicated them to him. Such was not the part played by Sully[334] towards Henry IV, nor would it be the role of a plain honest man towards a sovereign, above all a sovereign whose terrifying activity was such that he would settle by decree an expenditure of even fifty francs.

49 ON THE MINISTERS (CONTINUED)

For the past two hundred years, a minister in France has been a man who signs four hundred dispatches a day and gives dinner parties: a ridiculous existence.

Under Napoleon, these poor people killed themselves with work, but it was work *without thought* and hence inevitably absurd. To be well received by the emperor, one always had to solve the problem with which he was preoccupied at the moment of entering his presence. For instance: how much furniture is there in all my military hospitals? The minister who failed to answer promptly and as though he had thought of nothing else all day was abused, even though he possessed an intelligence equal to that of the Duke of Otranto.[335]

When Napoleon learned that Crétet, the best home secretary he ever had, was about to die of a fatal illness, he said: 'Just as it should be! A man whom I make a minister should no longer be able to make water after four years. It is an honour and an everlasting good fortune for his family.'

The unhappy ministers were completely dazed by this regime. The worthy Count Dejean was one day forced to ask for mercy. He had been calculating the war costs under the emperor's dictation and was so *drunk* with figures and sums that he was forced to stop and to tell him that he could no longer follow.

334 [Minister to Henry IV (1589–1610).]

335 [Fouché.] *Said by* Z [in English] ... Received on his return. [Z was Count Daru.]

Another minister fell asleep with his head on his papers while the emperor was talking to him, and he only woke up at the end of a quarter of an hour, still talking to His Majesty and replying to him – and he was one of the most brilliant minds.

The favour enjoyed by the ministers lasted for about a month or six weeks. When one of these unfortunate creatures saw that he no longer pleased the master, he would redouble his efforts, grow yellow and become twice as ingratiating towards the Duke of Bassano. Then suddenly and unexpectedly, they would return to favour. Their wives would be invited to join the court circle, and they themselves were overjoyed. Such a life was killing, but there was no leisure for boredom. Months passed like days.

When the emperor was pleased with them, he sent them an endowment of ten thousand francs a year. One day, having noticed a serious blunder which the Duke of Massa[336] had caused him to make, he pushed him and his red gown onto a sofa and punched him several times. The next day, ashamed of his quick temper, he sent him sixty thousand francs. I have seen one of his bravest generals (Count Curial) maintain that a blow from the emperor was no dishonour, but simply a mark of dissatisfaction on the part of the head of the French state. That is true, but one has to be very free from prejudice to realize it. Another time the emperor struck the Prince of Neuchâtel[337] repeatedly with a pair of tongs.

The Duke of Otranto,[338] who was the only man of genuinely superior intellect among the ministers, excused himself from doing the enormous amount of pen work by means of which the other ministers sought to win the master's favour. Benevento[339] was only the *primus inter pares*,[340] and his *pares*, ministers belonging to other courts, were no better than idiots.

336 [Régnier.]

337 [Berthier.]

338 [Fouché.]

339 [Talleyrand.]

340 [First among equals.]

He had nothing difficult to face. The Duke of Otranto had known how to save a government surrounded by enemies,[341] and while exercising the most mistrustful of tyrannies, maintained a considerable pretence of liberty and did not at all inconvenience the vast majority of Frenchmen.

The Dukes of Massa and of Feltre[342] were incapable of even such purely mechanical work. Annoyed by the ineptitude of the Duke of Feltre, the emperor had his work examined by the Count of Lobau. The minister for the navy and the home secretary, Counts Decrès and Montalivet, were clever men who did nothing but make stupid blunders. The former omitted to launch two hundred frigates armed as corsairs against English commerce, failed to train sailors quickly on the Zuider Zee, and committed a thousand other blunders. As for Montalivet, there were the guards of honour – who were simply meant to remove five or six hundred chatterboxes who spoke ill of the government in the cafés; in a most odious and unjust manner, he caused grievous pain to thousands of families. But Count Montalivet longed for a dukedom – and yet he was a superior man!

In 1810 public opinion showed the emperor its wish for the appointment of Talleyrand and Fouché; of Merlin to the Ministry of Justice; Soult to be chief-of-staff; Carnot or Marshal Davoust to the War Office; Daru to Expenditure and War Contracts; Chaptal to the Home Office; Mollien and Gaudin to the Ministry of Finance; Réal to be secretary of state; Bérenger, Français, Montalivet, Thibeaudeau to the branches of the Home Office; Le Voyer d'Argenson, Lezay-Marnezia, Count of Lobau, MM. Lafayette, Say, Merlin de Thionville to the Council of State. We see that Napoleon followed this lead in part.

Nevertheless, there were among his ministers four or five men so inferior that to have tolerated them indicates clearly his hatred of talent. It would have been much worse a few years later. Those who had acquired genuine experience of affairs during the Revolution were becoming disgusted or were about

341 [Fouché had ruthlessly suppressed dissent during the French Revolution.]

342 [Régnier and Clarke.]

to die, and the young men who would have replaced them sought only to vie with each other in servility. To be well received by the Duke of Bassano was the supreme happiness. If one wished to be forever lost in the favour of this duke, it was only necessary to display an ability to think. His favourites were people accused of being unable to read.

50 THE LEGION OF HONOUR

How then did France fare with ministers who followed so absurd a course? France carried on by means of the extreme rivalry which Napoleon had inspired in all ranks of society. Fame was the real legislator of the French. Wherever the emperor showed himself, and he travelled constantly over his vast empire, if real worth succeeded in breaking through the wall of ministers and chamberlains, it could be certain of an immense reward. The most insignificant chemist's apprentice working in his master's back-room was stirred by the thought that should he make some great discovery, he would receive the Cross of the Legion of Honour, and be made a count.

The regulations governing the Legion of Honour[343] were the only religion of the French. They were respected as much by the sovereign as by his subjects. Never since the ancient Romans' wreath of oak leaves had a public award been distributed so wisely or counted among its members so high a proportion of people of merit.[344] All the men who had served the country usefully received the Cross. It had been somewhat lavishly bestowed in the beginning, but later only about a tenth of the members of the order were devoid of merit.[345]

[343] [Membership of the Legion of Honour, established by Napoleon in 1802, was awarded to 38,000 persons, of whom only 4,000 were civilians.]

[344] Excellent chapter. [Note by Vismara.]

[345] Nowadays it is the opposite. If anyone wants a list of all the most naive, stupid and mediocre people in France, he has only to consult the list of all those who have received the Legion of Honour during the past three years [since 1815].

51 ON THE COUNCIL OF STATE[346]

Most of the basic laws other than those relating to personnel were referred to the Council of State. It will be a long time before any ruler has such another council. Napoleon had inherited all the men of ability produced by the Revolution. Exception was made only in the case of a very small number of men who had been too prominent in a party. Through contempt for mankind, through indifference as to selection and carelessness as to circumstances, he had buried in the Senate several men whose integrity or whose abilities would have been of greater use in the Council of State. Such were General Canclaux, Boissy d'Anglas, Count de Lapparent, Roederer, Garnier, Chaptal, François de Neuchâteau, Sémonville. Count Sieyès, Volney and Lanjuinais had attracted too much attention by their dangerous and liberal opinions. On the day the Concordat was concluded, Volney had predicted to Napoleon all the annoyance the Pope would cause him.[347]

Leaving aside these men, the Council of State consisted of what was best under the circumstances. It was divided into five sections: Legislation; the Home Office; Finance; War; the Navy.

If, for instance, the minister for war presented a decree on the organization of the Invalides,[348] the emperor would refer it to the War Office, which asked nothing better than to prove the minister at fault.

Decrees that were referred were debated in the department concerned by six state councillors and four Masters of the

346 This chapter is very good. [Note by Vismara.]

347 [Napoleon's relations with Pope Pius VII, despite the conclusion of the Concordat in 1801 and the Pope's presence at Napoleon's coronation in 1804, deteriorated, particularly when Napoleon occupied Rome and annexed the Papal States in 1808. When Pius excommunicated Napoleon, Napoleon had him confined at Savona and later at Fontainebleau until 1814.]

348 [The military hospital in Paris.]

Court. There were seven or eight Commissioners of Audit.[349] The department drew up a draft that was printed in the margin parallel to the minister's draft. The printed sheet was distributed to the four state councillors and both drafts were discussed at a meeting chaired by the emperor or the vice-chancellor, Cambacérès. Very often the decree was referred back again to the department, and then four or five different versions were printed and distributed before the emperor could bring himself to sign it.

This was an excellent innovation which the emperor introduced into despotic rule. It is a worthwhile power, which any minister who knows his business will not fail to acquire under a ruler who is weak, or at least who only half understands the matter.

The meetings of the Council of State were occasions for the emperor to show his brilliance. It was impossible to be more witty. In matters that were quite remote from his job as a general, during debates on the Civil Code for example, he was always astounding. His sagacity was marvellous, infinite, sparkling with wit, striking, bringing fresh light to bear on every question or underlining relationships which had gone unnoticed: abounding in lively and picturesque imagery, in spirited or, one might say, in *stinging* expressions that were all the more penetrating on account of the very incorrectness of his speech, which was always slightly odd, for he spoke neither French nor Italian accurately.[350]

What was delightful was his frankness and his good nature. One day when they were discussing some business he had with the Pope, he remarked: 'It is easy enough for you to say that. But if the Pope said to me: "Last night the Angel Gabriel appeared to me and said so and so", I should have to believe it.'

Among the Council of State were hot-headed members from the south who grew animated, went very far, and often were

[349] [Young men assigned by Napoleon as trainees for future senior office as administrators and diplomats. Stendhal was appointed an auditor to the Council of State in 1810.]

[350] [This paragraph is taken verbatim from Abbé de Pradt's memoirs as French ambassador to Poland.]

not to be satisfied with poor arguments. Count Bérenger was one such. The emperor bore them no ill-will. On the contrary he liked to make them talk: 'Now then, Baron Louis, what have you to say about that?'

The emperor's common sense constantly amended the old anomalies which had crept into the penal law through lapse of time. He was excellent when he criticized jurisprudence and argued with old Count Treillard. Some of the wisest provisions in the Civil Code owe their inspiration to Napoleon, especially on the subject of marriage.[351] The sittings of the council were almost a picnic.

Cambacérès chaired the council under him, as well as during his absence, when he displayed superior ability and great sense. His summing-up was admirable. He soothed wounded self-esteem and while calling to order every error of a speaker striving to be clever, he knew how to draw from him whatever light he might be able to shed on a question. [It is to the Council of State] that is due the admirable French administration: an administration which, despite severed relations, is still missed in Belgium, Italy and the Rhineland provinces.

The emperor wished neither to encourage dangerous republican virtues among the citizenry, nor to found great schools, like the polytechnic,[352] for judges and administrators. Far from it: he never visited the polytechnic, that great military establishment whose success had surpassed the hopes of the philosophers who founded it, and which had already filled the army with excellent majors and captains.

With these two unfortunate exceptions, the French administration was something that will never be improved upon. Everything about it was solid, rational and free from folly. It is said that there was too much scribbling and bureaucracy. People who make this objection forget that the emperor did not want, under any circumstance, any

351 See Locré's *Discussions,* although Locré is very tedious. [Locré was chief secretary to the Council of State. In 1804 he published *Minutes of the Council of State Containing the Discussion of the Civil Code.*]

352 [The *École Polytechnique.* Founded in 1795 as a school of engineering and artillery.]

inconvenient left-overs from the republics. The despot said to his subjects: 'Cross your arms, my prefects will take care of everything for you. As the price of such sweet repose, I only ask for your children and money.' Since the majority of the generals had grown rich through their pilfering, it was necessary, through inspections and counter-inspections, to render such knavery impossible.

Never again will a despot have administrators such as Count Français de Nantes for indirect taxes, which brought in 180 millions, and Count Montalivet for the Department of Public Works, which cost between 30 and 40 millions. Or Count Duchâtel, the ruthless director of the Crown Lands who, although he owed his position to his wife, was nevertheless excellent. Count Lavalette, the postmaster-general, might, like the Duke of Otranto,[353] compromise half France, but in this regard he only did what was essential.[354] This is praise indeed, for it relates to integrity of character. Count Daru, the most upright of men, had an exceptional talent for feeding an army. Count de Sussy was a good director of Customs and Excise. The emperor was the mortal enemy of trade, which rendered people independent, and Count Sussy was a thousand times too much of a courtier to defend trade against the master's aversion for it. Merlin at the Court of Appeal and Pelet de la Lozère as chief of police were excellent. In the emperor's hands the press became a means of vilifying or of degrading any man who had incurred his displeasure. But, although violent and unrestrained in his fits of temper, he was neither cruel nor vindictive. He offended many more than he punished, observed one of the men who most felt the weight of his anger. Count Réal was a man who was perhaps superior to any of the others: one of those men who should be of the company surrounding a despot.

The best elements in the Council of State were former liberals, called Jacobins, who had sold their conscience to the emperor for a title and 25,000 francs a year. Most of these gifted people were on bended knees before a Collar of the Legion of

353 [Fouché.]

354 [Stendhal means that private correspondence was inspected by the police.]

Honour[355] and were almost as base as Counts Laplace and Fontanes.

The council was admirable until the emperor surrounded himself with a court, that is, until 1810. Then the ministers openly aspired to become what they had been under Louis XIV.

It was naive and therefore ridiculous to oppose openly a minister's draft decrees. A few years more and it would have been shocking, in a departmental report, to have held a different opinion to the minister's. All frankness of expression was banned. The emperor appointed to the Council of State several men who, far from being children of the Revolution, had, in the prefectures, only acquired the habit of an exaggerated obsequiousness and of blind respect for the ministers.[356] The supreme merit of a prefect lay in imitating the conduct of a brigadier-general in conquered territory. Count Regnault-de-Saint-Jean-d'Angely, the most corrupt of men, gradually became the tyrant of the Council of State. The lack of honest people could be felt. Not because they let themselves be bought (integrity was seldom in doubt, except in the case of Regnault), but there was a lack of those rather surly and upright people whom nothing will prevent from telling ministers an unpleasant truth.

The Caffarelli brothers were of this type, but every day this quality grew more old-fashioned and absurd. There soon remained hardly anyone other than Counts Defermon and Andréossy who, carried away by their teasing disposition, dared to refuse to bow before ministers' draft decrees. The latter made it a matter of personal vanity to see that the draft decrees issued by their offices were passed, and gradually state councillors were replaced by clerks, and the draft decrees were no longer discussed except by the emperor at the moment of signing them.

Finally, at the fall of the empire, this Council of State which had created the Civil Code and the French administration had

355 Count Français, for instance.

356 Molé, Chauvelin, Fréville and Néville. [Molé, who became minister of justice in 1813, was notorious for his flattery of Napoleon.]

become almost insignificant, and those who looked from afar into the ministers' plans spoke of its destruction.

Towards the end of his reign, the emperor often held a Council of Ministers or a Cabinet meeting, which some senators and state councillors were invited to attend. There they discussed matters that could not well be confided to fifty people. That was the real Council of State. These meetings would have been all that was necessary if it had been possible to admit to it some independence of thought; I do not mean in respect of the master, but in respect of the ministers with influence. Who would have dared to say in front of Count Montalivet that the internal administration was deteriorating day by day, that every day one of the benefits gained by the Revolution was lost?

As a result of the suppression of conversation, the emperor occasionally felt the need, especially at night, to pour out his thoughts. He went hunting for ideas. It was then that ideas came to him which meditation would not have brought him. While satisfying this inclination, he would sound out the person with whom he spoke; or rather, the politician recalled the next day what the philosopher had heard the previous evening. Thus once, at two o'clock in the morning, he said to one of his officers: 'What will happen to France when I am gone?'

'Sire, your successor, who quite understandably will be afraid of being overwhelmed by the weight of your fame, will seek to underline the faults in your administration. A deficit will be declared in respect of the fifteen or twenty millions that you do not wish your minister of war to pay to the unhappy merchants of Lodève, etc., etc.'

The emperor discussed all this like the most outspoken and unaffected of philosophers and, one might add, like a most profound and agreeable one. Two months later, a complaint by some contractors was being discussed at a Cabinet meeting. The officer with whom Napoleon had discussed the future only a month before was speaking:

'Oh, as for you,' interrupted the emperor, 'I know that you are a friend of the contractors.'

Nothing was further from the truth.

52 *ON THE COURT*

In 1785 there was *society,* that is to say that people who were indifferent to one another assembled together in a drawing room and managed to achieve, if not any very lively enjoyment, at least a very delicate and constantly renewed pleasure. Indeed *the pleasures of society* grew so indispensable that they succeeded in stifling the sensual pleasures which belong to man's intimate nature and are essential to the existence of great emotions and of the higher virtues. Everything strong and sublime could no longer be found in the hearts of the French. Love alone gave rise to a few rare exceptions.[357] But, since great emotions are only to be met with at widely spaced intervals, whereas drawing-room pleasures are ever present, French society possessed a charm induced by the stringent rules which governed speech and manners.

Without anyone suspecting it, this extreme politeness had completely sapped the energy of the wealthy classes of the nation. There remained that type of individual courage which has its roots in extreme vanity, and which tends to be aroused in people's hearts and constantly increased by good manners.[358]

Such was France when the lovely Marie-Antoinette, seeking to procure for herself the pleasures due to a pretty woman, turned the court into society. People were no longer well received at Versailles because they were a duke and peer, but because Madame de Polignac[359] was pleased to find them agreeable.[360] It so happened that neither the king nor the queen was very intelligent. Furthermore, the king lacked character, and since he was accessible to anyone who offered advice,[361] he did not know how to put complete trust in a

357 We are not concerned with nine-tenths of society who are neither polite nor influential.

358 This is going too far back for an account of Napoleon's court. [Note by Vismara.]

359 [Protegée of Marie-Antoinette.]

360 *Mémoires* of Bézenval.

361 Even to one Pezay, who told him when to use his handkerchief.

prime minister[362] or how to ride on the bandwagon of public opinion. For some time it had not been worthwhile to attend court, but M. Necker's[363] first reforms directed against friends of the queen[364] made this truth obvious to all. From then on the court ceased to exist.[365]

The Revolution was started by the enthusiasm of noble minds from every class. The right wing of the Constituent Assembly set up an ill-timed resistance, and energy was needed to overcome it. This meant calling into the fray all young men of the middle classes who had not grown effete through an excess of good manners.[366] All the kings of Europe formed a league against Jacobinism. It was then that we had the sublime enthusiasm of 1792.[367] There was a need of surplus energy and of men from an even lower class, where very young men found themselves in charge of everything.[368] Our greatest generals emerged from the rank and file to command, as if it were child's play, armies of 100,000 men.[369] At this moment, the greatest in the annals of France, good manners were proscribed by law. Anyone who was polite became quite rightly suspect to a people surrounded by traitors and treachery, and we see that the people were not far wrong in suspecting a counter-revolution.[370]

362 By upholding the wise Turgot [minister 1774–6.]

363 [Minister of Louis XVI 1778–81, 1788–90. Father of Mme de Staël.]

364 M. de Coigny.

365 All this will no doubt be admirably described in the posthumous work of Mme de Staël, who by her talents was called upon to write the *Esprit des lois* of society. [Stendhal alludes to Montesquieu's *On the Spirit of the Laws* (1748).]

366 Barnave, Mounier, Thibeaudeau, Bérenger, Boissy d'Anglas, Merlin, etc., etc.

367 [The establishment of the French Republic and the outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars.]

368 Danton, Saint-Just, Collot d'Herbois, d'Eglantine and all the very energetic rabble of the Convention and of the Jacobins.

369 General Hoche, son of a fruiterer. Moreau, a law student.

370 For information on the conspiracies of the period, see the *Biographie des vivants* by Michaud.

But it is not through laws or a movement of enthusiasm that a race or an individual can renounce an old habit. On the collapse of the Terror, the French were seen to return frantically to the pleasures of society.[371] It was in Barras's drawing room that Bonaparte glimpsed for the first time the delicate and entrancing delights offered by an accomplished society. But like the slave who appeared in the market-place at Athens loaded with gold pieces yet without any copper change, his mind was too exalted, his imagination too inflamed and too quick for him ever to have known success in a *salon*. Moreover, he made his first appearance there at the age of twenty-six, with a character that was already formed and inflexible.

On his return from Egypt, the court of the Tuileries was at first like an evening round the camp fire. Behaviour there was frank and natural and devoid of wit. Mme Bonaparte alone and almost furtively was responsible for the appearance of the social graces. The society of her daughter Hortense and her own influence gradually softened the iron character of the first consul. He admired the politeness and decorum of M. de Talleyrand, who owed to his manners an amazing freedom.[372]

Bonaparte realized two things: that if he wished to be king, a court was required to win over the weak French people on whom the word court exerts an all-powerful influence. He also saw that he was in the hands of the military, and that a conspiracy of the praetorian guards could cast him down from the throne to death.[373] A court circle composed of palace prefects, chamberlains, equerries, ministers and court ladies would inspire respect in the generals of the guards, who were also French and therefore had an innate respect for the word court.

371 The balls for the victims. Mme Tallien's *salon*.

372 The anecdote of the cherries. 'Your Majesty has the finest cherries in his empire.' [Arriving late for a meeting, Talleyrand was reproached by Napoleon for keeping him waiting. Ignoring the rebuke, Talleyrand helped himself from a bowl of cherries which Napoleon was eating, and nonchalantly made the above remark.]

373 Remember the admirable conspiracy of General Malet, October 1812. [See footnote 431.]

But the despot was mistrustful. His minister Fouché had spies even among the marshals. The emperor possessed five different police forces which each kept an eye on one another.[374] A single word expressing less than adoration, I will not go so far as to say for the despot but for despotism, was sufficient to damn one forever.

He had aroused everyone's ambition to the highest pitch. With a king who had been an artillery lieutenant, and with marshals who had begun life as village fiddlers or fencing masters,[375] there was no commissioner of audit who did not aspire to be a minister;[376] no second-lieutenant who did not aspire to the sword of High Constable. Finally, the emperor wanted to marry off his courtiers within two years. Nothing renders a people more servile,[377] and once that was done, he wanted to regulate their morals. The police rudely intervened in the misadventure of one unhappy lady of the court.[378] In short, the court consisted of generals or young men who had never known good manners, which went out in 1789.[379]

It did not take much more to prevent the rebirth of social intercourse. There was no more society. Everyone shut himself

374 Those of the minister [of police], of the chief inspector of gendarmerie, of the prefect of police; of the postmaster-general, and finally the secret police, which was directly responsible to the emperor.

375 Victor, Duke of Belluno, fiddler at Valence. Augereau [Duke of Castiglione], a fencing master at Naples under the protection of Ambassador Talleyrand, who, when the Revolution broke out, gave him 25 louis to go and make his fortune in France.

376 After the example of M. Molé. [See footnote 356.]

377 Between 1808 and 1810, he had notified a rich Paris jeweller who had three daughters: 'General N ... will marry the elder of your three daughters, to whom you will give 50,000 écus.' The distracted father, who had access to the Tuileries, went to beg him for mercy: Napoleon repeated the same words, adding: 'General N ... will pay his court tomorrow and will marry the girl the day after.' They are now a very happy couple.

378 Mme Rapp [wife of General Rapp, who divorced her in 1811 though he was the guilty party].

379 For instance, Minister Roland going to see the king without any buckles on his shoes [1792].

up within his own household and it became an era of conjugal virtue.

One of my friends, who is a general, wished to give a dinner for twenty people. He went to Véry's restaurant in the Palais Royal. Having listened to his order, Véry said to him: 'No doubt you are aware, General, that I am obliged to notify the police of your dinner, so that they may send someone to it.' The general was much surprised and even more annoyed. That evening, finding the Duke of Otranto[380] at a council meeting at the emperor's, he said to him:

'For heaven's sake, it is going too far when I cannot give a dinner for twenty guests without letting in one of your people!' The minister apologized, but did not waive the required condition. The general grew indignant. Finally Fouché said, as though struck by an idea: 'But let us see your guest-list.' The general handed it to him. The minister had barely read a third of the names than he began to smile and, handing back the list, he said: 'There is no need for you to invite anyone unknown.' And the twenty guests were all people of importance!

What the monarch most disliked, after public spirit, was worldly wit. In a rage he banned the *Intrigante*, a comedy which, though written by an author in the pay of authority,[381] yet dared to make jokes about his chamberlains and poked fun at the court ladies who, under Louis XV, had created colonels. Such humour, so very foreign to him, shocked him deeply. To dare to make fun of a court!

Among a witty people who would cheerfully sacrifice a fortune for the pleasure of making a good joke, each month saw the birth of some new and malicious jest. This upset

380 [Fouché.]

381 [The playwright Charles Etienne, who was appointed censor in 1811. The *Intrigante* was performed before Napoleon in 1813.]

Napoleon. Sometimes audacity went as far as a song: then he would be bad-tempered for a week and maltreat his chiefs of police.[382] What embittered his annoyance was the fact that he was very sensitive to the pleasure of having a court.

His second marriage revealed a fresh weakness in his character. He was tickled by the idea that he, a lieutenant of artillery, had succeeded in marrying the granddaughter of Maria-Theresa.[383] The vain pomp and ceremony of a court appeared to give him as much pleasure as though he had been born a prince. He attained the height of folly by forgetting his main qualification, that of being a son of the Revolution. Frederick, King of Württemberg and an authentic king, said to him at one of those congresses which Napoleon held in Paris so as to justify, in the eyes of the French, his title of emperor: 'I see no historic names at your court. I would have all these people hanged or else I would relegate them to my ante-room.' This is possibly the only major piece of advice that Napoleon ever followed, and he did so with a respect that was, in itself, quite ridiculous. Immediately the hundred leading French families went to beg M. de Talleyrand to force them to reappear at court. Astonished, the emperor said: 'I wanted to have the young men of the nobility in my armies, and I could not find any.'

Napoleon reminded the great families that their nobility had nothing to do with him: for they had forgotten this. But he was obliged, as he has since admitted, to touch on this sensitive point with extreme caution: 'Because whenever I touched that cord, people shied like a horse whose bridle is pulled too tight.' He offended against the one passion of the French people: vanity. As long as he had only offended against liberty, everyone had admired him.

382 The song by Michaud [royalist journalist]: 'This hero is worth his weight in gold,/In France none doubts this;/But he would be worth e'en more/Were he worth all he costs us' (repeat). The song by that contemptible Martainville [royalist playwright] which led to his being made to cool off at Charenton [lunatic asylum] at the special intervention of the Duke of Rovigo [Savary, minister of police].

383 [The Archduchess Marie-Louise, whom Napoleon married in 1810, was the granddaughter of Empress Maria-Theresa of Austria, mother of Marie-Antoinette.]

Though poor in his youth and completely wrapped up in serious matters, Napoleon had nevertheless been very far from indifferent to women. His extremely thin appearance, his smallness and his poverty were not likely to give him confidence or to bring him many successes. It had required courage in small doses. It would not surprise me to think of him as having been shy with women. He feared their ridicule; and this man to whom fear was unknown, revenged himself on them in his heyday by constantly and crudely expressing a fine contempt for them to which he would not have referred had it been true. Before his rise to power, he wrote to his friend, the auditor Rey, about a love affair in which Lucien was entangled: 'Women are like muddy sticks: one cannot pick them up without being soiled.' By means of this inelegant image he sought to point out the errors of conduct to which they led; it was a prophecy. If he hated women it was because he had a supreme fear of the ridicule which they dispense. Finding himself at dinner with Mme de Staël, whom it would have been so easy to win over, he coarsely exclaimed that he only liked women who attend to their children.

He wanted to have, and it is said that with the help of his valet Constant[384] he did have, almost all the women at his court. One of them, a newlywed on her second appearance at the Tuileries, said to the ladies next to her: 'Good heavens, I cannot imagine what the emperor wants of me. I have received an invitation to be in the private apartments at eight o'clock.' The next day the ladies inquired whether she had seen the emperor, and she blushed exceedingly.

Seated at a small table, his sword by his side, the emperor would be busy signing decrees. The lady would enter the room. Without stirring, he would ask her to get into bed. Shortly after, carrying a candlestick, he would show her out himself, and would then return to reading his decrees, correcting and signing them. The essential part of the interview did not last three minutes. Frequently his mameluke

384 Faithfully translated from the works of Goldsmith. [Lewis Goldsmith, author of *Secret History of the Cabinet of Saint-Cloud*, 1800.]

was behind a screen.[385] He had sixteen such interviews with Mlle George,[386] and at one of them he gave her a fistful of banknotes: there were ninety-six in all. This had been arranged by the valet Constant. Sometimes Napoleon would ask the lady to take off her shift and afterwards, without troubling to get up, he would send her away.

Such conduct on the part of the emperor drove the women of Paris to despair. To send them away after two minutes so as to sign his decrees, and frequently without even removing his sword, seemed to them frightful, as it amounted to making them eat dirt. He would have been better liked than Louis XIV if only he had pretended to have a mistress and had thrown her a couple of prefectures, twenty captains' certificates and ten vacancies for commissioners of audit to distribute. What would it have mattered to him? Was he not aware that, on formal introductions from his ministers, he himself occasionally appointed their mistresses' protégés?

He was misled by fear of appearing to be weak. It was like his attitude to religion. Should a statesman call weakness that which would have won him the support of all the women? There would not then have been so many white handkerchiefs[387] to greet the return of the Bourbons.

But he hated women, and fear knows no reason. The wife of one of his ministers committed a single indiscretion. Napoleon had the cruelty to tell her husband. The poor man, who worshipped his wife, fainted. 'Did you suppose, Maret, that you were not a cuckold? Last Wednesday your wife slept with General Pir ...'[388]

There was nothing more insipid and one might say more stupid than the questions which he would put to women at the balls given by the city of Paris. This charming man, now assuming a bored and gloomy tone, would ask: 'What is your

385 This mameluke and Constant received an income of 20,000 francs from their master, but they were ungrateful and did not even follow him to Elba. They are now enjoying their fortune in Paris.

386 [An actress.]

387 [Representing the white flag of the Bourbons.]

388 [Perhaps General Piré.]

name? What does your husband do? How many children have you?' If he wished to signify that he was paying the highest level of distinction, he would pass on to the fourth question: 'How many sons have you?'[389]

For the ladies of the court, the height of favour was to be invited to join the empress's entourage. At the time of the fire at Prince Schwartzenberg's house,[390] Napoleon wished to reward several ladies who had behaved with distinction during the great danger which had suddenly appeared in the midst of the pleasures of a ball.

The court circle began at eight o'clock at Saint-Cloud. Besides the emperor and empress it consisted of seven ladies and of MM. de Ségur, de Montesquiou and de Beauharnais.[391] In a rather small room, the seven ladies, in full court dress, stood in a row by the wall. The emperor, seated beside a small table, looked at some papers. At the end of a quarter of an hour of profound silence he rose and said: 'I am tired of working. Tell Costaz to come in; I will go over the plans for the palaces.'

Baron Costaz, the most pompous of men, entered with the plans under his arm. The emperor made him explain to him the sums to be spent the following year at Fontainebleau, which he wanted to complete within five years. He first read the proposed plan, breaking off from time to time to make remarks to M. Costaz. He did not agree with the latter's sums for the cost of filling in a pond. He started doing sums in the margin of the report. He forgot to sprinkle sand over his figures, he scratched them out and covered himself with ink, he made mistakes. M. Costaz reminded him of the figures from memory. During all this, he had turned to the empress two or three times and said: 'Well, have the ladies nothing to say?' Then a few words were whispered in a very low voice about the universal talents of His Majesty, and the deepest silence once more ensued. Three quarters of an hour passed, the emperor turned again and said: 'But these ladies aren't talking – my dear, send for a game of lotto.' A bell was rung,

389 Add here a[nother] chapter. [This one] too long.

390 [Austrian ambassador in Paris 1809–12.]

391 [Respectively, Grand Master of Ceremonies, Grand Chamberlain and gentleman-in-waiting.]

the game of lotto arrived, the emperor continued with his calculations. He had sent for a fresh piece of paper and started his sums all over again. From time to time he was carried away by his own quickness. He made mistakes and lost his temper. During these difficult moments, the man who was taking the lotto numbers out of the bag and calling them out lowered his voice still more until it was no more than a mere movement of the lips. The ladies around him were barely able to guess the numbers he called. Finally the clock struck ten; the dreary game of lotto was broken off and the evening was at an end. Formerly people would have gone to Paris to boast that they had just returned from Saint-Cloud. But all that is not enough nowadays. A court is a very difficult thing to create.

The emperor had a remarkable stroke of fortune: his lucky star caused him to chance on someone uniquely well suited to be the leader of a court. This was Count de Narbonne, doubly a son of Louis XV.[392] Napoleon wanted to make him a gentleman-in-waiting to Empress Marie-Louise. The princess had the amazing courage to oppose him.

'I have no complaints against the present gentleman-in-waiting, Count Beauharnais.'

'But he is so stupid.'

'Your Majesty might have thought of that before you appointed him. But once admitted to my service, it is not seemly that he should leave without any reason, and above all that he should leave without me.'

The emperor had not the wit to say to Count de Narbonne: 'Here are five million francs to spend in a year, with absolute power over the department of trivialities. Make an agreeable court for me.' The mere presence of this delightful man would have been sufficient.

[392] The man who, as minister of war, declared war on everyone at the start of the Revolution, and made his round of official military visits followed by Mme de Staël. [Illegitimate son of Louis XV, Narbonne was minister of war 1791–2 thanks to Mme de Staël, whose lover he was.] Check this.

The emperor should at least have asked him to write amusing repartees for him. The minister of police[393] longed for a phrase that he could praise to the skies. Far from doing any such thing, the emperor seemed to think it a matter of duty to form his court from among the most boring people in the world. The Prince of Neuchâtel,[394] Master of the Horse, was useless in society, where he always appeared to be in a surly temper. M. de Ségur[395] had been pleasant, which was certainly more than could be said for MM. de Montesquiou, de Beauharnais, and de Turenne, or even for that poor man Duroc who, it was believed, thee'd and thou'd the emperor in private.[396] Nothing could be more dull than the crowd of equerries and chamberlains. There were seldom more than a dozen of these to be seen in the palace ante-chambers, and they were always the same faces, with nothing to relieve the boredom of the court.

I should not be surprised if the emperor, for whom an entertaining mind was completely foreign, felt an aversion for amusing people, who are indispensable to court life if it is to compete with that of the city. All the men attached to the court at Saint-Cloud were the most honest people in the world. There was no malice at this court, which was eaten up with ambition; there was only an overwhelming boredom. The emperor was never anything other than a genius. It was not in his nature to be amusing. Plays either bored him or else he conceived such a passion for one that to listen to it and to enjoy it became his all-absorbing preoccupation. Thus, wild

393 [Savary.]

394 [Berthier.]

395 He was entrusted by the master [Napoleon] with devising the etiquette to be observed at the imperial palace, a volume of 306 pages published by Galand in 1808 [*Ceremonial of the French Empire*], as well as with insulting Philosophy at the Institute [the Académie française] on the day the Count de Tracy was made a member. [1808. De Tracy was one of the leading 'ideologues' critical of Napoleon.] It was amusing to see what high-sounding phrases the Grand Chamberlain used to rebuke poor, unfortunate Philosophy. In 1817, having no official position, the Grand Chamberlain became a liberal. *True, but* [in English in the text] omit.

396 [General Duroc, Duke of Friuli, was on intimate terms with Napoleon. He was mortally wounded in 1813.]

It was obvious that among the leaders of the court, society could survive only if it consisted in a permanent state of constraint, vacuity and reserve. The most bitter enemies were brought face to face. There was no private social life.[405]

The baseness of the courtiers was not masked by pleasant words as under Louis XV.

Count Laplace, Chancellor of the Senate, scolded his wife for not taking enough trouble with her dress when she went to see the empress. The poor woman, who was very particular about her appearance, bought a charming dress, so charming that unfortunately it took the emperor's eye. He went straight up to her as soon as she entered the room, and in front of two hundred people said:

'Well, you *have* dolled yourself up, Madame Laplace! But you are old! You should leave dresses like that to younger women. They are not suitable for women of your age.'

Unfortunately, Mme Laplace, who was known for her claims to beauty, was just at that difficult time when it would take a very pretty woman to admit that she is no longer young. The poor woman returned home in despair. Her friends among the senators, without seeking to remind her of those cruel words, were prepared, so shocking had the incident been, to find the master in the wrong, should she mention it. Then M. Laplace arrived and said: 'But Madame, what possessed you to choose a gown fit for a young girl! You absolutely refuse to grow old ... and yet you are no longer young ... the emperor is right.' For an entire week no one could talk of anything except this typical courtier's remark. And it must be agreed that it was not gracious, and a credit neither to master nor servant.

405 Careful.

53 *ON THE ARMY*[406]

The men picked by Napoleon during his constant reviews and after consulting the rank and file as well as opinion in the regiment were excellent; those of the Prince of Neuchâtel were very poor. Intelligence was a reason for being passed over, and even more so the slightest display of patriotism.[407]

Nevertheless it is clear that stupidity was indispensable only to officers of the Guards, who should not be the kind of men to be moved by a proclamation. All that was needed in the Guards were blind instruments of the will of Mohammed.

Public opinion favoured the Duke of Dalmatia[408] or the Count de Lobau[409] for the position of chief-of-staff. If one or other of these had been given the appointment, the Prince of Neuchâtel

[406] Abandoned on 12 January 1818 for reasons of health. Resumed what follows for the style, 13 June 1818. I wanted to abandon *The Life* [in English in the text]; Mme de St[aël] infuriates me. I shall probably finish it and correct the style.

[407] The Prince of Neuchâtel [Marshal Berthier] possessed all the moral virtues of an honest man, but one may cast doubts upon his abilities. [Stendhal's notes in the Grenoble Public Library include the following portrait of Berthier: 'The Prince of Neuchâtel, brought up at Versailles in the lower ranks of the court, and the son of a man who, through geography [he was a geographical engineer], had succeeded in pleasing Louis XV, never showed any of the republican enthusiasm which had fired most of our generals in their youth. He was a perfect product of an upbringing at the court of Louis XVI, an extremely honest man who hated everything that smacked of either generosity or grandeur. He was the one man in the army least able to understand the wholly Roman character of Napoleon. Therefore, although he pleased the despot by his courtly manners, he constantly offended the great man by his *ancien régime* sentiments. When he became chief-of-staff and a prince, he pondered for some time upon the form of address he should use at the end of his letters. It was known that his sycophants carried out extensive research at the Bibliothèque Nationale, but none of their suggestions appeared to suit him. In the end he decided that he would conclude his letters without any form of address, merely signing them with his princely name of Alexander. Moreover, he possessed all the private virtues. He was only mediocre as a prince and general. Although somewhat brusque in manner, he was pleasant in society.']

[408] [Marshal Soult.]

[409] [Napoleon's aide-de-camp.]

would have been more pleased than either. He was worn out by the strain of his position, and for days on end he would put his feet up on his desk and, lolling back in his chair, would only whistle in response to all requests for instructions.

What was wonderful in the French army were the non-commissioned officers and the soldiers. As it cost a great deal to buy oneself out of conscription, all the children of the petty bourgeoisie were in the ranks, and, thanks to the state schools, they had read *Émile*[410] and Caesar's *Commentaries*.[411] There was not a second-lieutenant who did not firmly believe that if he fought well and was not hit by a cannon-ball, he would one day become a field-marshal. This happy illusion lasted up to the rank of brigadier. It then became apparent, in the ante-room of the Prince Vice-High Constable,[412] that short of a heroic action performed immediately under the eyes of the great man, the only hope lay in intrigue. The chief-of-staff surrounded himself by a kind of court, so as to keep at a distance those marshals whom he felt were better than he. The Prince of Neuchâtel, as chief-of-staff, was in charge of promotion in all the armies outside France. The War Office dealt only with the promotion of the military employed inside France, where it was the rule to promote only after action in the field.

One day, at a council of cabinet ministers, the worthy General Dejean, the home secretary, General Gassendi and several others met to beg the emperor to promote an artillery captain who had rendered the greatest service inside the country. The minister of war recalled that over the past four years His Majesty had crossed this officer's name off the promotion lists no less than three times. They had all dropped the official tone of voice, so as to beseech the emperor.

'No, gentlemen, I will never agree to promote an officer who has not been under fire for ten years. But it is well known that I have a minister of war who obtains my signature by fraud.' The next day, the emperor signed, without reading it, the decree gazetting this brave man a major in the infantry.

410 [Rousseau's treatise on education, 1762.]

411 [*On the War in Gaul* and *On the Civil War*.]

412 [Marshal Berthier.]

When he was with the army after a victory or after a simple advance carried out by a division, the emperor would always review the troops. After he had walked along the ranks with the colonel of the regiment, and had spoken to all the men who had distinguished themselves, he would order a drum-roll while the officers grouped themselves around him. Then, if a major in command of a group of artillery had been killed, he would ask in a loud voice: 'Who is the bravest captain?' There, in the heat of enthusiasm for victory and for the great man, hearts were sincere and the replies honest. Should the bravest captain not have sufficient means to be an artillery major, he would promote him in the Legion of Honour and, returning to the question, he would ask: 'After so and so, who is the bravest?' The Prince of Neuchâtel would note down the promotions in pencil, and as soon as the emperor had passed on to the next regiment, the commander of the regiment he had just left confirmed the officers in their new ranks.

At moments such as these, I have often seen the men weeping tears of affection for the great man. At the very moment of victory, the great conquerer would send off lists containing the names of thirty or forty people to be decorated or promoted. These lists usually bore his own signature, often scribbled in pencil on the field of battle, and are therefore still in existence in the National Archives. One day, after the death of Napoleon, they will constitute a memorable and touching historical record. On rare occasions when a general had not had the sense to draw up a list, the emperor would have the bad taste to say: 'I grant two officers' medals and ten crosses of the Legion of Honour to such and such a regiment.' This manner of proceeding is not consistent with glory.

When he visited hospitals, amputated and dying officers with the red medal of the Legion of Honour pinned to their wooden bedsteads would risk asking for the iron crown; but he did not always grant it, as it was the highest distinction of all.

The cult of Glory; the unexpected; an absolute enthusiasm for glory which meant that a quarter of an hour afterwards one let oneself be killed with pleasure, all combined to set intrigue at naught.

54 *ON THE ARMY (CONTINUED)*

Moreover, the spirit of the army varied. Fierce, republican and heroic at Marengo, it grew more and more selfish and monarchical. As uniforms became embroidered and loaded with medals, they covered hearts that were less generous. All generals (General Dessaix,[413] for instance) who fought with enthusiasm were removed or were kept idle. Intriguers triumphed and the emperor dared not punish their guilt. A colonel who fled or managed to fall into a ditch every time his regiment came under fire was made a brigadier and sent to the rear. The army was so selfish and so corrupt during the Russian campaign that it was almost on the point of telling its general to go to hell.[414] Moreover, the follies of the chief-of-staff,[415] the insolence of the Guards regiments who enjoyed all the privileges[416] and who for long had not been in battle, having become the army's permanent reserves, alienated many from Napoleon. Gallantry was not at all diminished (it is impossible for a soldier in a vainglorious nation not to let himself be killed a thousand times over, so as to be the bravest of his company), but the soldier, no longer being subject to discipline, lacked prudence and ruined his physical strength; if physical strength were all he had, his courage might fail.

One of my friends who is a colonel told me on our way to Russia that in the past three years he had seen 36,000 men pass through his regiment. Each year there was less training, less discipline, less patience and less strict obedience. A few marshals like Davoust and Suchet still held their army corps together, but the majority[417] appeared to be at the head of

413 [General Joseph Dessaix (not to be confused with General Louis Dessaix, killed at Marengo, 1800). Napoleon resented Dessaix's republican past as a member of the Council of 500.]

414 To go to hell does not seem quite right to me. Possibly I have forgotten the facts.

415 Careful, replace *follies* by *errors*.

416 Order of the day at Moscow on about 10 October for the non-commissioned officers and men who did not feel strong enough to walk ten leagues a day.

417 [Stendhal at first added 'like Marmont', then crossed it out, noting 'Out of prudence, remove "like Marmont"'.]

disorder. The army no longer knew how to act as a whole. It was due to this that the Cossacks, who were only wretched, ill-armed peasants, were destined to win a victory over the bravest army in the world. I have seen twenty-two Cossacks, the eldest of whom was only twenty years of age with only two years' service to his credit, rout a column of five hundred Frenchmen; that was during the campaign in Saxony in 1813.[418]

The Cossacks would have achieved nothing against the republican army of Marengo, but since such an army will never be seen again, the sovereign who rules the Cossacks rules the world.[419]

55 *PLANS FOR WAR ON RUSSIA*[420]

When the emperor undertook the war with Russia, such a war had been popular in France ever since the weakness of Louis XV had allowed Poland to be partitioned. Since the population of France had remained stationary, while sovereigns elsewhere were all increasing theirs, she was obliged sooner or later to resume her first place or else be reduced to second place. All the sovereigns needed a successful war with Russia, in order to deprive her of the means of invading southern Europe. Was it not natural to take advantage of the moment when a great military figure occupied the French throne and offset the country's immense disadvantages?

Besides these general reasons, the war of 1812 was a natural outcome of the Treaty of Tilsit, and Napoleon had right on his side. Russia, who had promised to ban English goods, was unable to fulfil her undertaking. Napoleon took up arms to

[418] Near Görlitz, twenty paces from the house in which the Duke of Friuli had just died [General Duroc, killed on 22 May 1813].

[419] See the journey to Vienna by M. Cadet-Gassicourt in 1809 [published 1818]. His is no mercenary pen. This chapter is the connecting link between the chapter on the Council of State and the court with the course of events.

[420] Insert *there 30 pages from Wilson.* [In English in the text. The reference is to Robert Wilson, *Political and Military Table of Russia,* 1817.]

punish her for violating a treaty to which she owed her very existence, which Napoleon could have put an end to at Tilsit. Henceforth sovereigns will know that a defeated ruler should never be spared.

56 *RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN*[421]

It is a little over a century since the ground on which the loveliest of capitals, Saint Petersburg, is built was no more than a barren marsh, and all the surrounding country lay under the domination of Sweden, at that time an ally and neighbour of Poland, a kingdom of seventeen million inhabitants. Since Peter the Great, Russia has always believed that by 1819 she would be the mistress of Europe if she had the courage to desire it, and America is henceforth the only country capable of withstanding her. That, it will be said, is taking the long view. See how far we have travelled since the peace of Tilsit in 1807. Since that peace treaty was concluded, all the military men predicted that if ever there were a contest between Russia and France, the outcome would be decisive for one or other of the two countries, and it was not France who stood the better chance. Her apparent superiority depended on the life of one man. Russia's strength was increasing rapidly and was due to the force of circumstances. Moreover, Russia was unassailable. There is only one defence against the Russians, and that is a very hot climate. In three years[422] they lost through illness in their Moldavian army thirty-six generals and one hundred and twenty thousand men.

Napoleon was therefore quite right to seek to stop Russia while France had a great man for absolute ruler. The King of Rome,[423] born to the throne, would probably not have been a great man and still less a despotic ruler. The Senate and the Legislative Body would have had, sooner or later, to have shown vigour, and certainly, the influence of the emperor of

421 August 18th, 1818.

422 [During the Russo-Turkish War, 1806–12.]

423 [Napoleon's son, Napoleon II.]

the French would have collapsed in Italy and in Germany on Napoleon's death. Nothing therefore could be wiser than the projected war with Russia and, since the primary right of every individual is self-preservation, nothing could have been more just.

Poland, through her relations with Stockholm and Constantinople, was a formidable bulwark for southern Europe. Austria and Prussia had had the stupidity and Louis XV the folly, to lend a hand in destroying this unique pledge of their future security.[424] Napoleon had to try to re-establish this bulwark.

Perhaps history will blame him for having made peace at Tilsit if he was able to do otherwise: it was a great mistake. Not only was the Russian army weak and exhausted, but Alexander had seen what was lacking in its organization.

'I gained time', he said, 'after Tilsit, and never was delay put to better advantage. In five years the Russian army, already so brave, became almost as well organized as the French army, with the immense advantage that one French soldier costs his country as much as four Russian soldiers.'

The whole of the Russian nobility is concerned either closely or remotely in the commercial interests involved in peace with England. When their sovereign opposes them, they arrange his disappearance.[425] On the Russian side, therefore, war with France was equally essential.

Since the war was essential, was Napoleon right to have undertaken it in 1812? He was afraid that Russia might make peace with Turkey, that England's influence at Saint Petersburg would increase, and finally that his reverses in Spain, which he was no longer able to conceal, might encourage his allies to recover their independence.

Several of Napoleon's advisers pointed out to him that it would be prudent to send another 80,000 men to Spain so as to finish off matters there before *getting mixed up in the north* (those were the words they used). Napoleon replied that it

[424] [In the first partition of Poland in 1772, which paved the way for those of 1793 and 1795.]

[425] [Emperor Paul I was murdered in 1801.]

would be wiser to leave the English army in Spain: 'If I chase them out of the Peninsula, they will come and land at Königsberg.'

On June 24th, 1812, Napoleon crossed the Nieman at Kovno, at the head of an army of 400,000 men.[426] It was southern Europe seeking to crush its future master. The campaign began with two political mishaps. The Turks, as stupid as they are honest, made peace with Russia, and Sweden, wisely assessing her own position, came out against France.

After the battle of Borodino,[427] Napoleon could simply have let his army go into winter quarters and have restored Poland, the real aim of the war, which he had achieved almost without firing a shot. Through vanity and so as to wipe out his misfortunes in Spain, he wished to take Moscow. This unwise decision would not have been followed by any drawback if he had stayed only twenty days in the Kremlin, but his ever mediocre political genius came into play and lost him his army.

Having reached Moscow on 14 September 1812, Napoleon should have left there on October 1st.[428] He allowed himself to be deceived by the hope of making peace. If he had evacuated the city, the heroic burning of Moscow[429] would have become ridiculous.

Towards 15 October, although the weather was superb and there were still only three degrees of frost, everyone realized that it was more than time to make a decision. Three alternatives presented themselves:

To withdraw to Smolensk, hold the line of the river Dnieper and reorganize Poland.

426 [Napoleon's total invasion force is estimated at between 500,000 and 650,000.]

427 [7 September 1812.]

428 [At St Helena Napoleon conceded that he erred by delaying in Moscow.]

429 The burning of Moscow began during the night of September 14th–15th. [The burning of Moscow was probably a deliberate act by the Russians.]

To spend the winter at Moscow, living on the stores that had been found in the cellars and by sacrificing the horses, which could have been salted down, and to march on Saint Petersburg in the spring.

Third and last, since the Russian army, which had suffered greatly on 7 September,[430] was farther off to the left, to execute a flank sortie to the right and to reach Saint Petersburg, which was defenceless and had no wish to burn itself. In such a position peace would have been certain. If the French army had been as vigorous as it was in 1794, the third alternative would have been chosen. But the mere suggestion of such a thing would have caused our rich marshals and elegant brigadier-generals to shudder as they left the court.

One of the drawbacks to this plan was that it meant remaining cut off from France for five months, and the Malet conspiracy[431] showed to what kind of people the government had been entrusted during the absence of a jealous master. If the Senate or the Legislative Body had been worth anything, the leader's absence need not have been fatal. During the march from Moscow to Saint Petersburg, the whole of the left flank of the army would have been disengaged, and for a whole month Napoleon could have sent a daily courier and thereby have governed France. With Marie-Louise as Regent, Cambacérès[432] as head of civil affairs and the Prince of Eckmühl[433] at the head of military affairs, everything would have functioned properly. Ney or Gouvion Saint-Cyr[434] at Mitau and Riga could have sent one or two couriers a month. Napoleon himself could have gone to Paris, since a Russian army inside Russia is of necessity immobile for three months.

430 At Borodino.

431 [On 23 October 1812, General Malet, a republican, proclaimed Napoleon's death in Russia and the formation of a provisional government. He convinced many officials but not the governor of Paris, whom he shot dead. Malet was tried and executed with 14 accomplices six days later.]

432 [Formerly second consul. Arch-chancellor of the empire during Napoleon's absences. One of the few whose advice Napoleon respected.]

433 [Marshal Davout.]

434 [Wounded in Russia and promoted to marshal by Napoleon.]

Man can only survive such terrible cold by spending ten hours of each day by the side of a stove, and the Russian army reached Vilna as decimated as was our own.

Of the three alternatives, the worst was chosen. But worse still, it was carried out in a most absurd fashion, because Napoleon was no longer the general he had been while with the army in Egypt.

Army discipline had suffered as a result of the plundering which it had been absolutely necessary to allow at Moscow, since no rations were issued to the troops. With the French character there is nothing so dangerous as a retreat. And it is in time of danger that discipline, which means strength, is required..

It became necessary to inform the army by means of a detailed proclamation that it was going to Smolensk, and that it therefore had to cover ninety-three leagues in twenty-five days. Each soldier was to be given two sheepskins, one horse-shoe and twenty nails to prevent his horse from slipping on the ice, and four biscuits. Each regiment could have only six carriages and a hundred pack-horses. Finally, for twenty-five days any insubordination would be punished by death. Every colonel and general, seconded by two officers, would have the right to order any insubordinate or marauding soldier to be shot on the spot.

The army had to be prepared for departure by a week of good food with issues of a little wine and sugar. Stomachs had suffered greatly during the march from Vitebsk to Moscow, for from lack of foresight they had found how to run out of bread in Poland.

Finally, all these precautions having been taken, it was necessary to reach Smolensk by avoiding as far as possible the route which had been laid waste on the way to Moscow, and along which the Russians had burned all the towns: Mozhaisk, Gzhatsk, Viazma, Dorogobuzh, etc.

On all these points, what was done was the exact opposite of what prudence dictated. Napoleon, who no longer dared have a soldier shot, was careful not to mention discipline. On its way back from Moscow to Smolensk, the army was preceded by thirty thousand deserters who claimed to be ill, yet who

appeared to be very well indeed for the first ten days. These men wasted and burned everything they did not use. The soldier who was loyal to his flag was left looking like a fool. And since this is the one thing which a Frenchman abhors above all, there were soon only men of heroic character or nincompoops under arms.

Soldiers frequently told me during the retreat, though I have difficulty in believing it as I never saw it, that in an order of the day issued at Moscow towards 10 October, the Prince of Neuchâtel had authorized all soldiers who did not feel well enough to do ten leagues a day to go on in advance. The men immediately got worked up and began to work out the number of marching days it would take to reach Paris.

57 RETREAT FROM RUSSIA[435]

Napoleon used to say: 'If I succeed in Russia,[436] I shall be master of the whole world.' He let himself be defeated not by men, but by his own pride and by the climate,[437] and Europe took up a new attitude. The minor princes ceased to tremble, the great sovereigns were no longer irresolute, and all looked to Russia, which had become the centre of an invincible opposition.

The English ministers had not reckoned on this good fortune – those ministers who only have influence because they take advantage of a freedom which they hate. Russia will advance from the position in which they have placed her to repeat Napoleon's achievement, and in a much more invincible way

435 To follow the whole account *from Wilson* [in English in the text]. 8 December 1817. *There begins what I have extracted from Hobhouse and others* [in English in the text].

436 Do not forget: Kaluga = Caligula. Smolensk = Salamanca. *Said by* [in English in the text] P. Galzz. He [Napoleon] would never pronounce the word 'Kaluga', saying sometimes 'Caligula', sometimes 'Salamanca'. His secretaries, knowing what he meant, took care to pass no remark.

437 It should not be supposed that winter was early; on the contrary, at Moscow the weather was as fine as could be. When we left on 19 October there were three degrees of frost and a superb sun.

because it will be more than just a life interest. We shall see the Russians in India.[438]

No one in Russia is as yet surprised by despotism. It merges with religion, and since it is exercised by the kindest and most pleasant of men,[439] only a few travelled thinkers are shocked by it. Russian soldiers are not moved by proclamations or decorations, but by the order of Saint Nicholas. General Masséna once related in my presence how a Russian soldier, on seeing a comrade fall, is persuaded that he will come back to life in his own country, and bends down to ask him to convey news of him to his mother. Like the Romans,[440] Russia has superstitious soldiers commanded by officers who are as civilized as we are.[441]

Napoleon clearly felt that the course of centuries had just changed direction when he said at Warsaw: 'It is only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous.' He added, however: 'Success will make the Russians daring. I will fight two or three battles against them between the Elbe and the Oder, and in six months I shall be back on the Niemen.'

The battles of Lützen and of Würtchen[442] were the final effort of a great people whose spirit was destroyed by a disheartening tyranny. At Lützen 150,000 men from units that had never come under fire fought for the first time. These youngsters remained aghast at the sight of the carnage. Victory brought no joy to the army. An armistice was necessary.[443]

[438] Careful.

[439] [Emperor Alexander I.]

[440] Montesquieu, *Religion des Romains*.

[441] See the pamphlet by Sir Robert Wilson, 1817. In 1810 and 1811, the Russian minister of war had all Napoleon's military orders translated and put into practice.

[442] [After Napoleon's retreat from Russia, Prussia joined forces with Russia. Both were defeated by Napoleon at Lützen on 2 May, Bautzen on 20–1 May, and Würtchen on 22 May 1813.]

[443] [An armistice was concluded on 2 June 1813. It lasted until 13 August.]

58 LEIPZIG

On 26 May 1813, Napoleon was at Breslau. There he was triply rash: he relied too much on his army, too much on the stupidity of foreign governments, and too much on the friendship of kings. He had created and saved Bavaria;[444] the Austrian emperor was his father-in-law and a natural enemy of Russia. He was the dupe of both these claims.

He should have taken advantage of the moment of respite to wear out the conquered countries, and ten days before the expiry of the armistice have taken up a position at Frankfurt-on-Main. Then the whole Russian campaign would have been saved; that is to say, as far as France was concerned the empire would not have been broken up. But Napoleon no longer had any influence beyond the Elbe, except in as much as he was the greatest prince in Europe.

The Silesian expedition was inopportunely entrusted to Marshal MacDonald, who is known only for his defeats: the battle of Dresden;[445] the abandonment of the contingent of Marshal Saint-Cyr; the battle of Leipzig;[446] the battle of Hanau,[447] all that was a mass of colossal mistakes such as

[444] [Napoleon created an enlarged kingdom of Bavaria in 1805, and in 1809 helped to put down the revolt in the Tyrol, which he had transferred to Bavaria. The King of Bavaria defected to the Allies in October 1813.]

[445] [26–7 August 1813.]

[446] [16–19 October 1813. The biggest series of engagements of the Napoleonic Wars, also known as the 'battle of the nations'. After his defeat at Dresden, Napoleon withdrew his forces stationed east of the Rhine.]

[447] [Bavaria joined the Allies after the battle of Leipzig. Napoleon beat off a Bavarian attack at heavy cost at Hanau on 30 October 1813.]

could only have been committed by the greatest military figure to have appeared since Caesar.[448]

As for the peace terms that were constantly being offered to him, time will tell if there was anything sincere in all of that.[449] Personally, I do believe in the sincerity of the governments at the time, because I believe in their fear. Moreover, the type of mind that is good at acquiring is not the same as the type of mind that is good at keeping. If, the day after the peace of Tilsit,[450] Napoleon's whole genius had been transformed into plain common sense,[451] he would still be master of the better part of Europe.

But you, reader, you would not have half the liberal ideas which now excite you. You would be intriguing for a position as chamberlain; or else, being a junior army officer, you would be striving to rise a step in rank by proving yourself one of the emperor's henchmen.[452]

[448] There is one man who may be an excellent military historian of these great events, namely the rescuer of Count Lavalette, General Robert Wilson. [Convicted of plotting to assassinate Louis XVIII during the Hundred Days, Lavalette escaped from France with Wilson's help.] I think that on all military matters Napoleon's memoirs will be perfectly correct. [Napoleon's military memoirs were published 1823–5.] Napoleon's rage after Dupont's capitulation [to the Spanish at Bailen, 1808.] The council meeting at which M. de Saint-Vallier was present. He [Napoleon] ... [indecipherable word] the windows of the Tuileries. He took great strides about the room. [He shouted:] 'Get out!' [In 1813 Count de Saint-Vallier was entrusted with rallying troops in the Dauphiné against an allied invasion. His assistant was Stendhal.]

[449] See the Prague negotiations in the *Moniteur* of the first days of August 1813, and in the Edinburgh *Annual Register*. [The Allies offered peace on the basis of France's 'natural frontiers', the Pyrenees, the Alps and the Rhine.]

[450] [July 1807.]

[451] [That is, if Napoleon had invaded Russia in 1807. See chapter 56.]

[452] Corrected on 13 June after 4 or 5 months' abandonment.

59 *INTERNAL MEASURES; HOLLAND IN REVOLT*

At Dresden after the battle of 26 August, Napoleon seems to have been the victim of a false point of honour: he would not retreat. Familiarity with the throne had increased the man's pride and lessened his common sense, which had been so remarkable in his early years.

This total eclipse of common sense is even more noticeable in his acts of internal administration. This same year, he caused his despicable Senate to quash the decision reached, on the findings of a jury, by the Brussels court of appeal in the matter of the town dues of Antwerp. The sovereign was at one and the same time legislator, prosecutor and judge – all out of pique through having discovered rogues who had been more shrewd than his own regulations.

Another *senatus-consultum*[453] clearly shows that the despot had gone mad. This act of the Senate was in the first place ridiculous in deviating from the established usages known as the constitutions of the empire. It declared that peace would never be concluded with England until she first returned Guadaloupe, which she had just given to Sweden.[454] The members of the Senate, most of whom were considered, prior to their appointment, to be among the most outstanding men in France, merely vied with each other in ignominy once they were assembled in the Luxembourg Palace. A courageous opposition tried in vain to put them to shame. They replied: 'The age of Louis XIV has returned, and we have no wish to ruin ourselves and our families forever.'

Since the debates were held in secret, the opposition knew only the perils of opposition and none of its glories, and a doubly grateful posterity should remember the names of Tracy, Grégoire, Lanjuinais, Cabanis, Boissy d'Anglas, Lenoir

[453] [A decree of the Senate. Napoleon used the *senatus-consultum* to impose legislation without consultation.]

[454] [In March 1814 Britain gave the captured French colony of Guadaloupe to Sweden as an inducement to join the coalition against Napoleon.]

La Roche, Colaud, Cholet, Volney[455] and a few others. They are famous men who even today still belong to the opposition and are still abused by the same sycophants, who have merely changed masters.[456]

Napoleon sent orders to all his prefects to abuse Bernadotte, Prince of Sweden, in hundreds of speeches that were doubly ridiculous since Bernadotte had taken Swedish nationality on leaving France.[457]

Meanwhile, Wellington, triumphing through force of circumstances over an abler general than he,[458] was nearing Bayonne. Holland was in revolt.[459] The forty-four gendarmes who found themselves constituting the entire garrison in Amsterdam on the day of one of the most peaceful insurrections in history were unable to prevent that country from detaching itself from France. The most impregnable fortified towns were occupied as though they were villages. In the interior, the emperor had left not a man, not a cartridge and, above all, not one capable head. The most that could be done was to keep Berg-op-Zoom, and shortly afterwards the French garrison, having captured the English army corps that besieged it, showed the world the *disjecti membra poetae*.[460]

After the Dutch revolt, the Frankfurt Declaration[461] appeared, which promised Belgium and the left bank of the Rhine to France. But what was there to guarantee the promise? Who was to prevent the Allies from re-opening hostilities six

455 [All were liberal senators of independent mind.]

456 *To see* [in English in the text]: *Staël's Reflections* [*on ... the French Revolution*] *for the names* [in English in the text].

457 See the *Moniteur*, of course. The most base signatories of these addresses are men who, two years later, were to show themselves the most ridiculous and bloodthirsty reactionaries. See the speech of M. S[éguier]. [Séguier, a notorious flatterer of Napoleon, who made him a baron, defected to Louis XVIII, who made him a peer.] In France an ancient pedigree compensates for all the acts of base infamy.

458 [Marshal Soult.]

459 [November 1813.]

460 [The limbs of a poet, albeit dismembered. Horace, *Satires* 1.4.62.] [Choose] a different line of verse.

461 [9 November 1813.]

months after the peace? Posterity will remember the good faith displayed by the Allies after the surrender of Dresden and of Danzig.

60 WEAKNESS OF NAPOLEON'S ENTOURAGE[462]

All parts of the empire seemed to be toppling, one on top of the other. Despite these frightful disasters, Napoleon still had a thousand means of stopping the course of his decline. But he was no longer the Napoleon of Egypt and of Marengo. Obstinacy had replaced talent. He could not bring himself to abandon those vast plans which for so long had been considered, both by himself and his ministers, to be absolutely infallible. In his moment of need he found himself surrounded solely by flatterers.

This man whom the reactionaries, the English, and Madame de Staël present as Machiavellianism personified, as one of the incarnations of evil,[463] was twice the dupe of his own heart. First, when he believed that the friendship which he had inspired in Alexander would make that prince do the impossible; and second, when he thought that, because on four occasions he had spared the House of Austria instead of destroying it, it would not abandon him in his misfortune. He said that the House of Austria would see the bad position in which it stood in regard to Russia. Bavaria, which he had created in 1805 and saved in 1809, deserted him and tried to finish him off at Hanau.[464] If the Bavarian general had had twenty trenches dug across the road, he would have succeeded. Napoleon had the defect of all *parvenus*: that of having too high an opinion of the class into which they have risen.

While on the road from Hanau to Paris, Napoleon had not the slightest inkling of the danger he was in. He remembered the

462 This chapter is rather incoherent.

463 The very words of Mme de Staël: in *Leviathan*, I think, Vol. 2.

464 [30 October 1813.]

exalted spirit of 1792, but he was no longer the first consul of a republic. To overthrow the consul it would have been necessary to defeat thirty million men. In fourteen years of administration, he had degraded men's hearts and had replaced the somewhat gullible republican enthusiasm by a monarchic egoism. Monarchy had thus been reinstated, and the monarch could be changed without any real revolution. What difference did it make to the nations concerned?[465]

On the other hand, for fourteen years we had had kings who were frightened to death. If they thought of the illustrious House of Bourbon at all, it was to see in what sort of state they might find themselves from one day to the next. After the battle of Leipzig, intrigues were quelled for a time and true merit was able to approach the court.[466] Thus patriotism and enthusiasm were in the allied camp together with the *Landsturm* and the *Landwehr*,[467] and they included men of merit. Napoleon had paralysed enthusiasm, and instead of having Carnot for minister of war as at Marengo, he had the Duke of Feltre.[468]

61 *CREATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD; GENERAL WEARINESS*

Having reached Frankfurt, the Allies seemed amazed at their good fortune. They first discussed an advance into Italy. The thought of invading France deterred them. They had the retreat from Champagne[469] constantly in mind. Finally, they dared to cross the Rhine (4 January 1814).

[465] If there was a revolution, it was due solely to the follies of the ministers of 1815. Incoherent.

[466] MM. Stein, Gneisenau [agents of social and military reform in Prussia 1807–13].

[467] [The *Landsturm* was the Prussian home guard, established in 1813 for volunteers not enlisted in the *Landwehr* or defence militia.]

[468] [Marshal Henri Clarke. He defected to the Bourbons in 1814.]

[469] [The retreat following Prussia's defeat by a French revolutionary army at Valmy in 1792.]

Napoleon had been for some time in Paris. His main object was, I believe, to gain reassurance against the fear which the French people inspired in him. He issued decrees merely to procure uniforms, rifles and boots, as though morale were of no importance. His aim was to extricate himself from this difficult situation without surrendering any of his majesty. For the first time in his life, he seemed small. His poor sub-editors whom he called ministers were afraid of a blow in the legs from the fire-tongs and hardly dared to breathe.

The emperor formed the National Guard. If France were to have a second Terror, which is highly possible if the priests and nobles are allowed to do as they like, the National Guard will help to make it less horrible than the first. All the semi-riff-raff will be found enlisted in it, and the small shopkeepers who fear plunder will intimidate the worst of the rabble. If France should chance to be thrown into a further series of events, the National Guard will also serve to uphold the aristocracy of wealth. It will be able to make certain quite probable stages of the fight between privilege and rights somewhat less bloody. For the National Guard to be completely reassuring in this respect, every year the soldiers should be allowed to elect their own officers up to the rank of captain and to submit candidates for the higher grades. The proportion of taxes to be paid by each rank should be fixed.

In January 1814 the most vital people in Europe were, as a nation, nothing better than a corpse. It was in vain that some thirty senators had been given the mission of trying to arouse those same French people who had been so terrible under Carnot.[470] All of us felt certain that by showing the red bonnet of freedom[471] we would have acquired in less than six weeks a more ruddy complexion from the blood of all the foreigners who had dared to sully the sacred soil of Liberty.

But the master cried to us: 'One more retreat, and one less revolutionary club.' Had he regained the empire, woe betide him who failed to hear this command! It was now that Napoleon should have felt the weight of his nobility. What

[470] [Carnot organized mass mobilization during the Revolutionary Wars.]

[471] [Emblem of revolutionary France.]

results could we expect from proclamations addressed to the hearts of the people, which began with feudal titles? Pictures of heroism? Fierce love of country?[472]

One outstanding characteristic of this period (January 1814) was the tone of the ministers' correspondence, especially that of Minister M[ontalivet].[473]

If a senator informed him that he had not five hundred rifles in good condition, the minister merely replied: 'Arm the schools: French youth has heard the voice of its emperor', and similar phrases which the most impudent journalist would have considered too exaggerated for a proclamation. It was so excessive that several times we asked ourselves: 'Is he committing treason?'

In a final fit of temper and thoughtlessness which ultimately destroyed France and which posterity will find difficult to believe, so closely allied was it to folly, at a time when it was absolutely imperative for the emperor to court his people, he picked a quarrel with the Legislative Body. He accused the most honest men in the world[474] of having sold themselves to foreign powers, and he wound up the session of the Legislative Body.[475]

That was what despotism did to one of the greatest geniuses who ever lived.

[472] Incoherent.

[473] [Stendhal first wrote: 'home secretary, Montalivet.' He then crossed it out leaving the initial M. and wrote in the margin: 'Out of consideration for the misfortunes of the home secretary, Montalivet'.]

[474] [Laîné and Flaugergues. See footnote 168.]

[475] [28 December 1813.]

62 *REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL GUARD IN THE COURTYARD OF THE TUILERIES (24 JANUARY 1814)*[476]

In Paris, on the morning of 24 January, Napoleon showed himself to be a great tragic actor. A dark veil had begun to descend upon the fortunes of France. The confidence of the chief of state was the people's confidence. As soon as fear appeared, all eyes were turned towards him.

He was reviewing the National Guard of Paris in that courtyard of the Carrousel where all Europe had come to watch the Guards manoeuvre. He stood in front of that triumphal arch adorned with those mighty trophies which it was so soon to lose.[477] It seemed as though the grandeur of the setting had affected him and he was moved by it. He had the officers of the National Guard informed that they were to go up to the Hall of the Marshals. For a moment they all thought he was going to propose that they leave Paris and march on the enemy. Suddenly he came out of the Gallery of Peace and appeared before them with his son in his arms. He presented the young King of Rome to them and said:

'I place this child, the hope of France, in your care. As for me, I go forth to battle, my only thought the salvation of the country.' Instantly tears appeared in the eyes of everyone. I shall remember this heart-rending scene all my life.[478] My tears angered me. Each moment reason told me: 'In the days of men like Carnot and Danton[479] the government, if confronted with so urgent a peril, would have done better than merely try to touch hearts that were weak and lacking in courage.'

In fact, the same people who on 24 January wept at the Tuileries, on 31 March waved white handkerchiefs at every

[476] Corrected on 14 June 1818.

[477] [The bronze horses removed by Napoleon from St Mark's cathedral in Venice in 1797 were restored to that city by the Congress of Vienna in 1815.]

[478] 24 January 1814. [Stendhal was not in Paris on 24 January, but organizing the defence of Grenoble under the Count de Saint-Vallier.]

[479] [Revolutionary leaders.]

crossroad and appeared to be drunk with joy when Emperor Alexander rode along the boulevards. It should be noted that on 31 March the question of the illustrious House of Bourbon had not yet arisen, and the Parisians were overjoyed merely because they found themselves conquered.

63 *AN IDEA ABOUT PARIS*

Under similar circumstances, the Convention had decreed that on such a day the soil of Liberty would be purged of the presence of the enemy,[480] and on the day appointed the armies carried out the order.

On 25 January 1814, the day of the emperor's departure, the whole future of France seemed to boil down to the future of one man. The grandiloquence to which this man gave expression in his speeches and which, in his halcyon days, had won him all the faint-hearted was now the reason why everyone secretly enjoyed seeing him humiliated.

Many people longed for the taking of Paris merely as a spectacle. When I rejected this remark with horror, one of these people said quite rightly: 'Paris is a capital that no longer suits France. Seven hundred thousand egoists, the most pusillanimous and characterless people in France, find themselves through force of habit the representatives of France in all her great revolutions. You may rest assured that fear of losing their mahogany furniture will always make them commit every act of cowardice that is suggested to them. It is not their fault. An excessive meanness has completely atrophied their souls in all except purely personal matters. The capital of France should be a city capable of defence situated beyond the Loire, near Saumur.'

480 [In April 1792, when the National Assembly declared war on Austria.]

64 CONGRESS OF CHATILLON

The Congress of Châtillon began on 4 February and ended on 18 March.[481] One great power was opposed to Napoleon's downfall.[482] With the support of this great power he could in all security have made peace. But he would have considered himself dishonoured if he had accepted a France diminished by so much as one single village from what she had been when he had received her on the 18th Brumaire. That was indubitably the mistake of a great spirit, the misconception of a hero! And in it lay the whole secret of his conduct. Other princes proved themselves to be free from any such futile delicacy.[483]

65 FRENCH CAMPAIGN

The defences which Napoleon undertook around Paris were romantic, but none the less they were on the point of succeeding. French armies were dispersed at immense distances: at Danzig, at Hamburg, on Corfu, in Italy. The west and the Vendée were in a ferment. Close at hand this conflagration was nothing, but from a distance it aroused fear. The south flared up and assassinations were feared. Bordeaux had declared itself in favour of the king who was ultimately to give us constitutional government.[484] The north deliberated with that calm which had distinguished it throughout the whole course of the Revolution. The east, inspired by the noblest sentiments, only asked for arms with which to cleanse the soil of France.

Napoleon, deaf to the voice of reason which advised him to throw himself into the arms of Austria, appeared to be solely preoccupied by his admirable campaign against the Allies.[485]

481 [1814. The Allies offered peace on the basis of France restored to her pre-revolutionary frontiers. Napoleon refused.]

482 [Austria.]

483 In a footnote, some feeble insult from Staël.

484 [Louis XVIII.]

485 Wilson.

With 70,000 men he resisted 200,000 and defeated them time and again. The army fought desperately, and in all fairness, it must be said, for honour's sake. The army was far from foreseeing the fate in store for it. It is said that the generals did not do as well as the soldiers and ordinary officers, for they were rich. The allied armies also showed courage. They were ten to one. The *Landwehr* and the *Tugendbund*[486] had introduced a patriotic enthusiasm into their ranks; however, as their generals were not self-made men but princes appointed by right of birth, the fortunes of battle were variable. Napoleon, so mediocre as a monarch, frequently recovered as a general the genius of his early years. He spent two months thus, dashing from the Seine to the Marne and from the Marne to the Seine.

What posterity will perhaps most admire in the military career of this great man are the battles of Champaubert, Montmirail, Vauchamp, Mormant, Montereau, Craonne, Rheims, Arcis-sur-Aube and Saint-Dizier.[487] His genius was consumed in a feeling like that of a brave man about to draw his sword against a fencing master. Moreover, he was mad: he refused the offer of the Army of Italy, 100,000 strong, which Prince Eugène[488] offered him through the intermediary of M. de Tonnerre. A few days later a shell fell ten feet from his horse. Instead of moving aside, he stepped over it. It burst four feet away from him without touching him. I am inclined to think that he was putting his fate to the test.

On 13 March, on the outskirts of Laon, the emperor was joined while under fire by Prince Bernadotte's[489] doctor. Again he was offered peace. It was destiny's last word.

[486] A society founded in part by the witty Arndt. [Ernst Moritz Arndt wrote prose, poems and songs to foster national feeling in Germany.]

[487] [These battles took place in February and March 1814.]

[488] [Eugène Beauharnais, Napoleon's step-son and Viceroy of Italy. Stendhal's claim appears to be without substance.]

[489] [The former Marshal Bernadotte, elected Crown Prince of Sweden in 1810, joined the Allies in 1813.]

66 *ALLIED MARCH ON PARIS*

Napoleon had long cherished the idea of pushing an advance force into Alsace. It was a question of reinforcing his army with all the eastern garrisons and of falling on the rear of the allied army. Scourged by sickness, fearing open revolt by the peasants of Alsace and Lorraine, who on all sides had started killing soldiers cut off from their units, and lastly, about to run out of war material and food, the enemy army intended to retreat.

The emperor's plan would have succeeded if Paris had had the courage of Madrid. This daring plan would still have succeeded[490] had it not been for the basest treachery. A foreigner on whom Napoleon had showered undeserved favours, the Duke of Dal[matia],[491] sent a messenger to Emperor Alexander. This messenger informed the emperor that Napoleon was marching towards Lorraine in order to wipe out the allied army during its retreat, and had left Paris undefended. That message changed everything. When the messenger arrived, the Allies had for the past twenty-four hours already begun their retreat to the Rhine and Dijon.[492] The Russian generals said that it was time to put an end to such a romantic campaign and to go and capture the places unwisely left in the rear.

On receiving the message, Emperor Alexander was for advancing, but the Austrian commander-in-chief opposed this with all his authority, to the point of forcing Alexander to say that he would take the responsibility on himself.[493] What reader is not struck by a sudden thought? It was obvious that Napoleon's police – which is singled out by Madame de Staël and all the writers of libel – that same Machiavellian police force of a ruthless man was, at a crucial moment, seen to err

490 [On the manuscript Stendhal underlined the words from 'had it not been' to 'Emperor Alexander', and noted in the margin, 'To be on the safe side, put four lines of dots.']

491 [Marshal Soult. It is unclear why Stendhal calls him a foreigner.]

492 Insert the sentence from Wilson: 'What punishments they deserve who sent the messenger!'

493 Hobhouse, p. 86.

through an excess of humanity. From a horror of bloodshed it lost Napoleon's family an empire. For four or five months there had been plotting in Paris. But the police had despised the plotters so much that they made the mistake of despising the plot.

The same thing was happening in the provinces. The senators knew that certain people were corresponding with the enemy. Juries would have condemned them without a doubt, and to have brought them before the criminal courts would at least have put a stop to their machinations. But no one wished to run the risk of bloodshed. I can personally vouch for the truth of this fact.

I think that posterity will admire Napoleon's police which, with so little bloodshed, was able to forestall so many conspiracies. During the first years which followed our revolution, after a civil war and with a minority no less rich than it was corrupt,[494] and with a pretender who was backed by England, a police force was perhaps a necessary evil.[495] Witness the conduct of England in 1715 and in 1746.[496]

[494] The Infernal Machine of 3 Nivôse. [The royalist attempt to assassinate Napoleon by means of a bomb, 24 December 1800. See chapter 24.]

[495] In any government not founded solely for the benefit of all by following the precepts of reason and of justice, in any government whose subjects are corrupt and who ask nothing better than to exchange rights for privileges, I am afraid that a police force is necessary. 16 June 1818.

[496] [The suppression of the Jacobite rebellions.]

The imperial police never had cause to reproach itself with incidents like the alleged Lyons conspiracy or the Nîmes massacres.[497]

On receiving the message, the Allies marched on Paris. Having learned of this move one day too late, Napoleon still wanted to pursue them. But the Allies had taken the road from Meaux while Napoleon was taking his army, by forced marches, to Fontainebleau.

67 CAPTURE OF PARIS

On 29 March 160,000 allied troops faced the heights which shelter Paris to the north-east. They had left a large body of their excellent cavalry to observe Napoleon. On 30 March, at six o'clock in the morning, they opened fire from Vincennes to Montmartre. The Dukes of Ragusa and of Treviso,[498] with no more than 16,000 men, held out for the whole day. They killed 7,000 of the enemy. The Paris National Guard, 35,000 strong,

497 [Incidents in the reaction that followed the Bourbon restoration.] Did the famous author whom I am trying to combat make her statements in good faith? If so, then this famous woman had a very poor brain. When slandering someone it is a wretched excuse to plead poor judgement. Who obliged you to speak? And if you only raised your voice to slander misfortune and to hit people when they are down, what is there to distinguish you from the basest of men? The writer would be truly happy to see such reasoning refuted. He feels the need to respect what he admires and what for so long he did respect. It may perhaps be observed as an extenuating circumstance that it takes more than one kind of courage to defend the imperial police nowadays. As for closing every avenue open to criticism, that would take a profusion of words which is no part of the author's character. *Pauca intelligenti.* [Latin – a word to the wise.] As for people who have merely interests and no opinions, they may be worthy of respect in the general run of life, but pen in hand they are always to be despised. *For me* [in English in the text]: People from the provinces speak like judges but for most of the time they are no more than barristers. Do I need to add that Bonaparte's police, which strove to keep the legitimate king at a distance, acted with essentially criminal intent? Yet while pursuing this wrong tack, was it cruel, and did it perpetrate or condone the commission of crimes? Careful.

498 [Marshals Marmont and Mortier.]

lost one man called Fitz-James, a café owner from the Palais Royal.[499]

By five o'clock the Allies were masters of the heights of Montmartre and Belleville. At nightfall their camp fires crowned them. Paris capitulated in the afternoon, and the army had to fall back on Essonne. The city of Paris, which was in fact already taken, enjoyed a most beautiful and infamous calm. The soldiers of the Guard, who crossed it all through the night, wept.

68 ALLIED ENTRY INTO PARIS

Throughout the whole of 30 March, while the battle raged, the boulevards were a brilliant sight.

Towards nine o'clock in the morning of the 31st, there were crowds milling about, just as on the finest of days. A good deal of fun was made of King Joseph[500] and Count Regnault. A group of people on horseback rode by wearing white cockades and waving white handkerchiefs. They shouted: 'Long live the King!'

'Which king?' I heard people beside me ask. There was no thought of the Bourbons, any more than of Charlemagne. That group, which I can still see, consisted of perhaps twenty persons, all looking rather worried. They were allowed to pass with the same indifference as was shown to ordinary strollers. One of my friends who ridiculed their fear told me that the group had assembled on the Place Louis XV[501] and did not get beyond where the rue de Richelieu crosses the boulevards.

Towards ten o'clock, some twenty sovereigns made their entry by the Porte Saint-Denis at the head of their troops. All the balconies were full, the ladies were delighted by the spectacle. At the sight of the sovereigns they waved a mass of white handkerchiefs. Every one of them wanted to see and possibly

499 Other accounts say forty.

500 [Napoleon appointed Joseph commander of the Paris National Guard.]

501 [Now the Place de la Concorde.]

to sleep with Emperor Alexander. I went up on to the large balcony belonging to Nicolle, the restaurant-keeper. The ladies were admiring the pleasing appearance of the Allies and their joy was at its height.

So as to be able to recognize each other in the midst of so great a variety of uniforms, the allied soldiers all wore a white handkerchief tied round the left arm. The Parisians mistook it for the sash of the Bourbons, and at once they all felt royalist.

The march past of these superb troops lasted for over four hours. Nevertheless signs of royalism were still only to be seen in the great square formed by the junction of the boulevards, the rue de Richelieu, the rue Saint-Honoré and the rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré.[502]

At five o'clock in the afternoon, M. de Maubreuil, who is currently in England, attached his cross of the Legion of Honour to his horse's ear, and undertook, with the help of a rope, to pull down the statue[503] which surmounted the column in the Place Vendôme. There were a good many riff-raff around, and one of them climbed the column and struck the huge statue repeatedly with his cane.

69 TALLEYRAND'S INTRIGUES

Emperor Alexander stayed at the house of M. de Talleyrand. This minor fact sealed the fate of France;[504] it was decisive. Monsieur ...[505] spoke to the emperor in the street and asked him to restore its legitimate rulers to France. The reply could not have been less definite. The same person made the same plea to several generals, also in the street. The replies were

[502] Corrected on 14 June 1818.

[503] [The bronze statue of Napoleon by Chaudet.]

[504] And probably of the whole of Europe from now until 1838. [Stendhal predicted that the Bourbon restoration engineered by Talleyrand in 1814 would lead to a long period of reaction.]

[505] Stendhal first wrote 'Demosthène de la Rochefoucauld' [Louis-François-Sosthènes, Viscount de la Rochefoucauld, royalist politician]. He then crossed out the name, writing underneath it: 'Out of prudence three dots : M ...'.

even less satisfactory. No one thought of the Bourbons; no one wanted them; they were unknown. Details of a little plot should be known. Several clever people, not without daring, thought it might be possible, in the midst of all the fuss, to obtain for themselves a ministry or a gratuity. They were not hanged: they succeeded, though they received neither ministry nor gratuity.[506]

In their advance through France, the Allies were quite amazed; three-quarters of the time they thought that they were marching into an ambush. As, unfortunately for Europe, their intellect was not on a par with their good fortune,[507] the Allies found themselves in the hands of the first opportunists who ventured to ride out to their headquarters. M. de V[itrolles][508] was the first to arrive, with letters of introduction from the Abbé Scapin.[509]

Both said that they spoke in the name of France and that France wanted the Bourbons. The effrontery of these two persons afforded great amusement to the allied generals. However good-natured the Allies might be, they rather felt the absurdity of such pretensions.

M. de Talleyrand hated Napoleon, who had deprived him of a ministry to which he had become accustomed.[510] He had the good fortune to have staying in his house the monarch[511] who for a month was the master and legislator of France. Talleyrand employed every means to win him over, and introduced the Abbé Scapin and other adventurers who claimed to represent the French people.

506 Forgot Italy in the abdication.

507 [Against the words from 'for Europe' to 'good fortune', Stendhal noted: 'two lines of dots; remove this to be on the safe side'.]

508 [Royalist intriguer in Napoleon's service. Napoleon made him a baron.]

509 Stendhal refers to the Abbé de Pradt. [After serving Napoleon as almoner, Bishop of Poitiers and ambassador to Poland, he defected to the Bourbons. He referred to Napoleon as 'Scapin' after the rascally hero of Molière's comedy.]

510 [Talleyrand resigned from the Foreign Ministry in 1807.]

511 [Emperor Alexander.]

It must be admitted that these intrigues were contemptible. They only became admirable as a consequence of the huge mistake committed two days before, when Empress Marie-Louise and her son had been made to leave Paris. Had this princess remained she could have offered Emperor Alexander the hospitality of the Tuileries, and Prince S[chwartzenberg][512] would naturally have had a deciding voice in affairs.

70 WEAKNESS OF THE EMPEROR'S MINISTERS

On 30 March, as half Paris went crazy on hearing the sound of shooting, the emperor's wretched ministers, with Prince Joseph[513] at their head, did not know where on earth they were.

The prince disgraced himself by letting it be known that he would not leave, just as he was fleeing. Count Regnault-de-Saint-Jean-d'Angély[514] brought even greater shame on him.[515] As for the ministers, they may well have shown a certain degree of energy, since after all everyone was looking to them and they were not devoid of intelligence. But fear of losing their positions, and of being dismissed by the master if they as much as let slip a word about the danger, had turned them into so many Cassandras.[516] They did not concern themselves with action but with fine writing, in which the language of despotism became ever prouder the nearer the despot drew to the precipice.

On the morning of the 30th they gathered at Montmartre. The outcome of their deliberations was the bringing there of

[512] See footnote 390. Now allied commander-in-chief.

[513] [Napoleon entrusted Joseph Bonaparte with the defence of Paris on 28 January 1814. Joseph fled the city on 30 March.]

[514] [On 30 March Regnault led a sortie of the National Guard, but fled back with it to Paris.]

[515] Four lines of dots. Careful.

[516] [Prophets of woe.]

eighteen bore cannon with twelve bore shot.[517] Then, following the emperor's orders, they all decamped in the direction of Blois. If Carnot, the Count de Lapparent, Thibaudeau, Boissy d'Anglas, the Count of Lobau and Marshal Ney had been in office, they would have behaved rather differently.

71 *CONVERSATIONS AT PRINCE TALLEYRAND'S HOUSE*

After the triumphal march along the boulevards, the emperor,[518] the King of Prussia and Prince Schwartzenberg spent several hours on the Champs Elysées watching the march past of their troops. These august personages then went to the house of M. de Talleyrand in the rue Saint-Florentin, near the Tuileries. In the drawing-room, they found the people we mentioned earlier.[519] Prince Schwartzenberg had authority to agree to anything. The sovereigns seemed to say that if the vast majority of the French, including the army, desired the return of the former dynasty, it would be restored to them. A council was held. It is stated that His Majesty Emperor Alexander[520] said it seemed to him that there were three alternatives:

1 To make peace with Napoleon, taking all proper precautions.

2 To set up a regency and proclaim Napoleon II.

517 I do not think that this fact has been proved.

518 [Alexander.]

519 [Vitrolles and the Abbé de Pradt.]

520 Careful, H[is] M[ajesty] T[he] E[mperor] A[lexander].

3 To recall the Bourbons.[521]

Those who had the honour of being in the company of the allied sovereigns argued as follows among themselves:

'If we have them make peace with Napoleon he will have sized us up: we will remain what we are now and possibly he will have us hanged. If we have a prince recalled who has been absent for twenty years, and to whom the job will not come easily, he will make us prime ministers.'[522]

The sovereigns could not conceive that the virtues which filled their own hearts were so foreign to Frenchmen. They believed the latter's protestations in favour of the fatherland, that sacred word with which these petty opportunists were lavish to the point of boring their illustrious listeners.

After two hours of discussion, Emperor Alexander said: 'Well, I declare that I will not treat any further with Napoleon.'

Michaud the printers, who were also present at the Council of State, rushed to print the following declaration which covered the walls of Paris ... [523]

People whose astonishment had not deprived them of their composure[524] pointed out that this poster did not exclude the King of Rome.[525]

Why, said these factious people, did no-one bother to convene the Legislative Body, which after all is the source of all legitimate power, and the Senate, which comprised the elite of the nation and had erred not from lack of intelligence but through excessive egoism? Sixty egoists gathered together

521 Later on in Alexander's declaration, the *Biographie* says that he said that he would recognize and guarantee whatever constitution the French people decided on. Given this example and that of the clause in the capitulation of Paris relative to Ney, a people will be mad to trust in a king's promise. If Emperor Alexander had guaranteed the constitution of the Senate, the emergency would never have arisen which ended fortuitously at Waterloo.

522 The 's' is comical: they all longed to try their hand.

523 Leave ½ page blank for the declaration.

524 Improve this line.

525 [Napoleon's infant son.] De Pradt, p. 69.

always have more sense of decency than six. Furthermore, there were perhaps some ten true citizens[526] in the Senate. What should have been a debate was treated as a mere ceremony – hence the campaign of Waterloo.

Had not Napoleon, in a fit of despotic caprice, dismissed the Legislative Body, none of what took place would have happened. If the Legislative Body, which the conduct of MM. Laîné and Flaugergues[527] had just rendered illustrious, had been reconvened, the eminently sensible man[528] who decided the fate of France would have thought of consulting it.

72 *NAPOLEON RETREATS TO FONTAINEBLEAU*

Napoleon, having learned of the movements of the enemy, was making for Paris in person. At midnight on 30 March at Essonne, half-way to Fontainebleau, he met one of the bravest generals of his Guards (General Curial), who informed him of the fatal issue of the battle.

'You behaved like cowards.'

'Sire, we were attacked by troops who outnumbered us by three to one and who were roused by the sight of Paris. Never have Your Majesty's troops fought better.'

Napoleon made no reply and ordered the horses of his carriage to be turned towards Fontainebleau. There he assembled his troops.

On 2 April he reviewed the army corps of Marmont, Duke of Ragusa, who had evacuated Paris on the evening of 31 March and was then encamped at Essonne. This corps formed the advance guard of his army, of which it constituted almost one-third. Marmont assured Napoleon of the loyalty and devotion of his men, who were indeed above temptation, but he forgot to answer for their general.

526 [Stendhal means public-spirited men.]

527 [By their public-spirited interventions. See footnotes 168 and 474.]

528 [Emperor Alexander.]

Napoleon planned to march on Paris and attack the Allies. He was deserted one by one by most of his staff, especially by the Prince of Neuchâtel,[529] over whose defection he jested gaily with the Duke of Bassano.[530] Finally he held a council of war, and for the first time he lent an ear to what Marshal Ney, the Duke of Vicenza[531] and the most devoted members of his staff had to tell him about the general discontent which his refusal to make peace had aroused throughout France. He then abdicated in favour of his son, and on 4 April he sent Ney, MacDonald and Caulaincourt to convey this proposal to Emperor Alexander.

73 *MARMONT*[532]

When these generals passed through the advance posts of the French army and halted to have their passports countersigned by Marmont, they told him the object of their journey. He appeared confused and said something between his teeth about proposals that had been made to him by Prince Schwartzenberg, and to which it could be said that he had lent an ear. But, he added, speaking to the envoys who had been stupefied by his words, what he had just learned changed the whole situation, and he would now break off his separate negotiations. After a few moments one of the marshals broke the silence and observed that it would be simpler if he, Marmont, came with them to Paris and joined them in the negotiations with which they were charged. Marmont did go with them, but with what intentions, as was shown by the subsequent movements of his army corps!

529 [Marshal Berthier, Napoleon's chief-of-staff, defected to the provisional government set up by Talleyrand.]

530 [Maret, foreign minister 1811–13.]

531 [Caulaincourt, foreign minister November 1813–April 1814.]

532 [Marshal Marmont, Duke of Ragusa.] This chapter has also been translated word for word from No. 54 of the *Edinburgh Review.* No doubt the person inculpated has a justification to make known.

The marshals left him with Prince Schwartzenberg and went to fulfil their mission to Alexander, who referred them to the Senate. This sovereign had as yet no definite plan and had not thought of the Bourbons. He did not realize that he was in the hands of two intriguers, of whom one in particular, Talleyrand, thought only of avenging himself.[533]

When the officer who had accompanied the marshals to the advance posts of the army returned to Fontainebleau and reported that Marmont had gone with them to Paris and that he had seen him hidden in the back of their coach, everyone expressed surprise and several voiced their suspicions. But Napoleon, with his habitual belief in friendship, replied that if Marmont had gone with them, he felt sure that it was so as to do everything in his power to help him. During the absence of the negotiators, a council of war met at Fontainebleau consisting of all the army generals. It was a question of deciding what to do if the marshals' proposals were rejected. Souham, second-in-command of Marmont's corps, had, like the others, been summoned to the council of war. Souham, who knew about Marmont's secret understanding with the enemy, feared that he would be shot on reaching Fontainebleau and that everything had been discovered. Instead of going to Fontainebleau as instructed, he advanced his army corps during the night of 5 April, until it was close to Versailles. By this move he placed himself in the power of the Allies, who occupied the town, and left the troops at Fontainebleau without any advance guard. Souham's men, unaware of the instructions which he had received, obeyed him without any suspicions.

It was only on the following morning that, to their despair, they realized the trap into which they had fallen. They wanted to kill their generals, and one must agree that they would have given the world a beneficial example. If one of their colonels or generals had shown some of the character formerly so common in the armies of the republic, he could have killed Souham and brought the army back to Essonne.

It is pointless to add that the defection of Marmont's army corps at this critical moment sealed the fate of the marshals'

533 See the true account of the month of April 1814 told by M. de Pradt.

negotiations. Napoleon, deprived of a third of his small army, was no longer an object of fear to the Allies. The Treaty of Fontainebleau[534] was signed on 11 April.

We have dwelt on these details because Marshal Marmont's betrayal of his friend and benefactor has not been fully understood. It is neither his defence nor his surrender of Paris which deserve special attention, but his subsequent conduct, which will transmit his name to posterity.[535]

74 DEPOSITION OF NAPOLEON

The day following that upon which M. de T[alleyrand] had convinced the allied sovereigns that the whole of France was clamouring for the Bourbons, he went to the Senate which, weak as ever, nominated the provisional government indicated to it.

On 2 April the Senate deposed Napoleon; on the 3rd the Legislative Body confirmed the acts of the Senate.

During the night of 5 to 6 April, the sovereigns declared that they did not accept Napoleon's first abdication in favour of his son. Emperor Alexander had a place of retreat offered to him and his family, and he would retain his title.[536]

534 [Napoleon abdicated and renounced the thrones of France and Italy for himself and his heirs. The Allies granted him personal sovereignty of Elba and an allowance.]

535 [Marmont received a peerage from Louis XVIII. At the trial of Marshal Ney in December 1815 he voted for the death penalty. A verb *raguser* (from his title of Duke of Ragusa, which Napoleon had granted him in 1808) was coined to signify 'to betray'.]

536 [That is, his title of emperor.] Take a page or two and the farewell from Hobhouse.

75 *CONSTITUTION; THE MINISTERS OF LOUIS XVIII*

Let us leave Napoleon on the island of Elba for a moment. Events will soon recall us there.

The provisional government, out of respect, I believe, for the sovereigns who had advanced wearing the white cockade, banned the tricolour cockade and proclaimed the white one.

'Good,' said Napoleon, then at Fontainebleau, 'there is a cockade all ready for my supporters should they ever regain their courage.' The army was deeply annoyed.

This act was symbolic of the government that was to follow. The measure was all the more inept in that a plausible excuse for leaving well alone already existed: Louis XVIII, at that time brother of the reigning monarch, had worn the tricolour cockade from 11 July 1789 to 21 June 1792.[537]

The Senate drew up a constitution that was a contract between the nation and one man. This constitution called Louis-Stanislas-Xavier[538] to the throne. This prince, a paragon of all the virtues, arrived at Saint-Ouen. Unfortunately for us, he dared not trust in his own intelligence, which was nevertheless so very superior.[539] He felt obliged to surround himself with people who knew France. Like everyone else, he had a high opinion of the abilities of the Duke of Otranto and the Prince of Benevento.[540] But his generosity made him forget that loyalty was not the outstanding characteristic of these men. They said to themselves: 'The king cannot possibly do without us. Let him try to govern by himself; in a year's time we will be prime ministers.'

537 [From just before the fall of the Bastille until he left France as an emigré.] Hobhouse, Vol. I, p. 91.

538 [Louis XVIII.]

539 Fatuous style of writing.

540 [Fouché and Talleyrand. Talleyrand set up a provisional government on Napoleon's abdication which included himself and Fouché.]

There remained only one other possibility, which arose two years later; this was that the king should find a young man of the highest ability of whom he could make a great minister.[541]

In 1814 the corrupt man who enjoyed the king's confidence[542] gave France the most amiable ministers she had seen in a long time. For instance, home affairs were entrusted to a man who was in himself more agreeable than all the rather uncouth ministers of Napoleon, and who yet firmly believed that to live in the house of the home secretary and to dine there was, in fact, to be home secretary.[543] Throughout all its phases the Revolution had never seen anything so innocuous as this government.[544] Had the ministers had some energy, they would certainly have done harm, as they do not seem to have been lacking in will-power. But they were impotent.[545] In his great wisdom the king groaned at the inaction of his ministers. He was so well aware of their poor intelligence that he had one of them buy him the *Biographie Moderne* and he then made no appointment without first consulting the relevant biographical entry.[546]

76 MISTAKES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LOUIS XVIII

We will venture to speak fairly freely about some of the mistakes of this government. According to the Charter,[547] as well as in our heartfelt wishes, the king is inviolable, and he is so, above all, because his ministers are responsible. The king

541 [Duke de Decazes.]

542 [Talleyrand.]

543 [Abbé de Montesquiou.]

544 Who says this? Is it Hobhouse? No, but I have forgotten.

545 Staël: Vol. I, 127. When nations are of any importance in public affairs, all these drawing-room wits fall below the level of events. It is men of principle who are needed.

546 *Said by Doligny.* [In English in the text. Doligny is a pseudonym for Count Beugnot, minister of the interior April–May 1814.]

547 [The Constitutional Charter, 1815.]

was not yet familiar with either men or events in France. His government of 1818 proves what his great wisdom can achieve when it is not led astray by blind men.

Louis XVIII reached Saint-Ouen.[548] He was intended purely and simply to accept the constitution drawn up by the Senate. Bonaparte having, through his tyranny so to speak, renounced his title as *son of the Revolution,* Louis found this an opportune moment to assume it. The procedure in question appeared at most to be purely temporary, and once the danger was over would not prevent his third or fourth successor from calling himself *King by the Grace of God* and to speak of legitimacy. As for the king himself, his reign was to be happy and peaceful, and Bonaparte consigned to oblivion.

Abbé de Montesquiou[549] drew up a memorandum for His Majesty in which he said, referring to the preamble to the constitution: 'There can be no doubt that *King of France and of Navarre* must be inserted. I am even inclined to think that the constitution should be styled a royal edict.'[550]

On 14 June the constitution was laid before both chambers assembled in the palace of the Legislative Body. The chancellor,[551] the most amiable of ministers, told the representatives of the nation:

'That several years had passed since divine Providence had called their king to the throne of his fathers ..., and that being in full possession of his hereditary rights to the throne of France, he did not wish to exercise the authority which he had received from God and from his forebears other than by personally setting limits to his own power ..., and that, although absolute power in France was vested in the person of the king, His Majesty wished to follow the example of Louis-le-Gros, Philippe-le-Bel, Louis Xl, Henry II, Charles IX and Louis XIV and modify the exercise of his authority.'

548 What follows is a faithful translation from *The History of the Hundred Days* by J. Hobhouse.

549 [The home secretary.]

550 *Moniteur* of 15 April 1814.

551 [Viscount Dambray.]

One must admit that Charles IX and Louis XIV were odd choices.[552] After having expressed the desire to efface from French history everything that had taken place during his absence, the king promised faithfully to observe the constitutional Charter, which: 'by the free exercise of royal authority he had granted and would grant, which he had conceded and would concede to his subjects'.[553]

It should be realized that the king's advisers, while prompting the sovereign to reject, through his proclamation at Saint-Ouen, the constitution drafted by the Senate, had had a kind of abstract made of it for him, which he promised to grant to the people.

After His Majesty entered Paris, a committee was assembled at the Place Vendôme consisting of some thirty splendid minds, the most sheep-like legislators who could be found. They turned this abstract into articles and drew up the Charter without any idea of what they were writing. None of these unfortunate people realized that they were part of a transaction between the parties then dividing France. The king frequently advised them to stipulate for the faithful carrying out of all the promises contained in his Saint-Ouen proclamation. It was this constitution, drawn up by chance, that the chancellor had placed at the beginning of the wise speech which has just been quoted.

During this fit of stupidity that had seized the capital of France, the worthy Grégoire, who had dared to advance some general principles on Liberty, principles recognized throughout Europe, was accused by men of letters of seeking the rebirth of anarchy. Lambrechts and Garat, who protested against hasty action, were insultingly called 'metaphysicians'. Benjamin Constant,[554] the man through whom right-thinking in France is expressed, was warned to keep quiet, as a foreigner uninformed as to our habits.

Finally this charter, so wisely prepared, was read before both chambers and not accepted by them. Yet they would have

552 [Both kings were adherents of absolute power.]

553 Look up the correct terms.

554 [See p.215. Constant was Swiss.]

voted whatever was put before them, including the Koran, for that is how things are in France. Under such circumstances, to go against the majority is to be taxed with an absurd vanity. 'In France, one must above all do as others do.' The story of the sheep of Panurge[555] might well serve us as a coat of arms.[556]

The foolish omission of a formal acceptance of the Charter deprived the king of all genuine legitimacy.[557] In France even schoolchildren can reason as follows: 'Every man has an absolute and unlimited power over himself; he may transfer a part of this power. Twenty-eight million men cannot vote, but twenty-eight million men can elect one thousand representatives to vote for them. Therefore, without a freely chosen representative assembly, no legitimate power can exist in France; there can only be the right of might.'[558]

77 *THE MINISTERS' SERVILITY*

The entire conduct of the ministers was on this level. The agents of power whom they dared to dismiss were replaced by weak and discredited men. Soon it became amazingly clear that the Bourbon cause was daily losing adherents. The ministers committed so many follies that they convinced the people that at heart the king was the greatest enemy of the Charter. These ministers had in their mind's eye the court of Louis XVI and the fate of Turgot.[559] Thinking always that royal authority would revive and would know how to reward those who had foreseen this while knowing how to respect it

555 [An entire flock of sheep threw itself into the sea after the first was thrown in by Panurge, a character in Rabelais's *The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel*.]

556 *Reflections on the Revolution* [by Mme de Staël], Vol. 1, p... .

557 Humorous colour to add variety: it is, moreover, the colour of the subject.

558 *For me: is that took [sic] from Jefferson?* [In English in the text. The reference is to Jefferson's *Handbook of Parliamentary Law,* French translation, 1814.]

559 [Reforming minister dismissed by Louis XVI in 1776.]

during the *days of misfortune,* these wretches thought only of vying with one another in servility in order to obtain promotion.

78 *THE CHARTER*

Whatever Montesquieu and many others may have said, there are only two kinds of government: *national* governments and *special* governments.

To the first category belong all those governments which uphold the principle that *all rights and all powers always belong to the whole body of the nation, that they are vested in it, emanate from it and exist only by and for it.*

We call *special* governments all those, whatever they be, which recognize sources of legitimate right and power other than that of general consent, such as divine right, birth, a social pact, express or implied, in which the parties make mutual stipulations, like foreign powers.[560]

Although fundamentally defective, although not even a contract between the people and one man, like the English Constitution of 1688, our Charter would have satisfied everyone. The French people are too childish to examine it closely. Moreover the Charter is adequate, and if ever it is applied, France will be fortunate, more fortunate than England. In the present century it is impossible to draw up a bad charter; there is not one of us who could not write an excellent one in half an hour. What would have been a supreme effort of genius in the time of Montesquieu is nowadays a commonplace. Finally, any charter that is applied is a good charter.[561]

To shield from storms the throne of the wisest and best of princes, it would have been enough if the people believed the Charter to be sincerely desired. But it was precisely this that

[560] *Commentaires sur l'esprit des lois* [by Destutt de Tracy], pp. 13, 14, Liège, 1817.

[561] An idea of Benjamin Constant.

the clergy and the nobility did everything possible to discredit.

A hundred thousand priests and a hundred and fifty thousand angry nobles were, like the rest of the nation, supervised only by eight idiots[562] whose only thought was of the blue ribbon.[563] The nobles wanted and still want to recover their estates.[564] What could be simpler than to give them the equivalent in state bonds? By such means these people, who have no opinions but only interests, would have been tied to the national credit, and to the Charter, as a necessary evil.

Ministers who never wrote a line or gave a dinner without infringing the spirit of the Charter had soon accumulated substantial violations of it. The wife of Marshal Ney never returned from a visit to court without tears in her eyes.[565]

79 *VIOLATIONS OF THE CHARTER*

1 Article 260 of the Penal Code, which is upheld by the Charter, forbids, on pain of imprisonment and fine, any compulsion of Frenchmen to observe holidays or Sundays and to cease work. A police regulation ordered just the opposite, in ridiculous terms. It laid down that all Frenchmen, whatever their religion, must *decorate the front of their houses in all streets through which the Blessed Sacrament was to pass in procession.*

No opportunity was lost to hold these processions, which became objects of ridicule to all parties. As long as the Roman Catholic religion has no profitable jobs to offer, it will be thought ridiculous in France. For a long time now, no one has believed in it. Religion has been a

562 [The members of the government.]

563 [The *cordon bleu,* ribbon of the order of the Holy Ghost.]

564 [Lands confiscated and sold during the Revolution.]

565 Marshal Ney's interrogatory.

lost cause in France ever since Abbé Maury tried to use it to shield the privileges of the nobility.[566]

2 On 10 June, six days after the institution of the Charter, which promised freedom of the Press (article 8), there appeared the home secretary's order re-establishing censorship. What was most absurd is that this order was made a law. For a long time in France the future will have no meaning for the government.

3 On 15 June and 15 July, two decrees on the recruitment of the Royal Guards infringed article 12 of the Charter, to the detriment of the army.

4 On 21 June and 6 July, a Council of State was set up which, flouting article 63, was raised to the level of a special court.

5 On 27 June, article 15, the most important of all, in which it is stated that the legislative power is vested in the king, the peers and the members of parliament, was infringed for a mere trifle by a decree annulling a tax which had been established by the law of 22nd Ventôse of the year XII.[567]

6 On 16 December, unemployed officers were placed on half-pay. This was in direct opposition to article 69. The measure may have been necessary, but a law should have been passed for a period of one year and then with misgivings, and it should have been solicited in fear and trembling on bended knees.

From that moment the army was lost to the Bourbons. Eight men out of ten in France have fought at one time or another, and the remaining two take pride in sharing the feelings of the army. The most unfortunate anecdotes now began to circulate. A royal duke asked an officer in which campaigns he had taken part: 'In all of them.' 'With what rank?' 'Aide-de-camp to the emperor.' The other turned his back on him. To the same question, another replied that he had twenty-five years'

566 [Maury was Archbishop of Paris. As a member of the National Assembly in 1789 he argued against the sequestration of church lands.]

567 Hobhouse, Vol. I, p. 63.

service – 'twenty-five years' brigandage.' The guards failed to please while drilling, and those old soldiers, famous for so many victories, were told that they would have to go to England to be taught their drill by the King of England's guards.

Swiss soldiers were brought to Paris while French soldiers were placed on half-pay. Six hundred nobles (for whom the Parisians invented the name which later became so famous, *Flying Squadron of Louis XIV*) and an equal number of children who had barely left school – were dressed in absurd costumes invented by Cardinal Richelieu, and protected the person of the king, who appeared to mistrust his guards. As soon as there exists a privileged body in Paris, one must be prepared for insolence and know how to forestall it, as Napoleon did. The scenes which took place in the Café Montansier deeply offended national vanity.

The Old Imperial Guard, that very brave and easily influenced body of men,[568] was outrageously exiled from the capital. Marshal Soult, the minister of war, sought to have it recalled. A countermand a thousand times more outrageous than the original order, stopped him half-way. The Chouans,[569] who were in league with foreigners, enjoyed high favour.[570]

The Legion of Honour orphanage was closed, and even worse, re-opened out of weakness.

The Legion of Honour was publicly sold. More, it was thrown to people farthest removed from public life, so as to degrade it. For example, it was conferred on the scent-makers of the Palais Royal.[571] The Bourbon army was barely 84,000 strong and it was officered by 5,000 aged émigrés or young, beardless nobles.

568 [Stendhal first wrote and then deleted 'that body of blind and selfish followers'. In the margin he wrote, 'Careful. Delete selfish followers.']

569 [Catholic royalist rebels in the Vendée in the revolutionary and early Napoleonic period.]

570 Hobhouse, Vol. I, p. 88.

571 Careful.

80 VIOLATIONS OF THE CHARTER (CONTINUED)

Here are further infringements of the Charter:

7 On 30 July, a military academy was set up so that members of the nobility might enjoy the advantages of the decree of 1751.[572]

8 On his own authority, the chancellor imposed a tax on the sums which judges award by way of provisional damages, on certificates of naturalization and on newspapers.

9 In opposition to the letter of the Charter, the government, having been unable to pass a law for the reorganization of the Court of Appeal, renewed it by decree and dismissed several much respected judges; from then on judges could be bought. This court upholds the codes of law in France. It is an extremely important mechanism for the maintenance of order in the country, and until the time to which we refer, it had been excellent.

81 VIOLATIONS OF THE CHARTER (CONTINUED)

Although the people who drew up the Charter were unaware of it, the Charter is divided into two parts. In the first part, it is truly *constitutional,* that is, a *recipe* for making laws, a law on how to make laws. In the second part, it is *a friendly transaction* between those parties which divided France.

10 The most important article in this second part is article 11, which reads as follows: 'Any enquiry into opinions and votes prior to the Restoration is forbidden.' The

572 [The decree established military cadet corps for the training of young nobles at royal expense.]

same oblivion is enjoined on the courts and on citizens.[573]

In a vain and childish nation, this article was one of the least important to royal authority. Those who do not enjoy favour in France are always despised, and the people who were protected by this article would have been the most shameless flatterers. But the ministers were as childish as the rest of the nation. They very much wanted to obtain the dismissal of certain members of the Court of Appeal. People in royal palaces are always ahead of the opinion which they attribute to the sovereign.[574]

11 An act of folly even more incomprehensible to anyone unfamiliar with the leaders of the period was the expulsion of fifteen members of the Institut.[575] This ridiculous action gained importance from its consequences. It was a blow to the nation, almost the last straw. The day after, the French people would have expelled the Bourbons had it been able. Yet what did it matter either to the Bourbons or to the French people whether the following belonged to the Institut: Guyton-Morveau, Carnot,[576] Monge,[577] Napoleon Bonaparte, Cambacérès,[578] Merlin, Roederer,[579] Garat, Sieyès,[580]

573 See the so-called law of amnesty [1816] which sent into exile all who had voted for the death of Louis XVI.

574 People dislike freedom of the press, but are too weak to prevent it. The appearance of defying the government lends a certain piquancy to the review *Le Nain jaune* [*The Yellow Dwarf*, a satirical journal under the first Restoration 1814–15].

575 [The National Institute of France replaced the Académie française in 1795. It resumed its former title in 1816.]

576 [Veteran revolutionary general.]

577 [Distinguished mathematician.]

578 [Second consul. A distinguished jurist.]

579 [Expert on tax reform.]

580 [Veteran revolutionary.]

Cardinal Maury, Lucien Bonaparte, Lakanal, Grégoire, Joseph Bonaparte and David?[581]

What is incredible is that people were found to replace those who had been eliminated. There were people who agreed to enter, *by decree*, a body which owes its importance solely to public opinion. It could not have happened in the days of d'Alembert[582] and Duclos.[583] And people are surprised that men of letters constitute the most degraded class in Paris![584]

82 *RETURN TO THE OLD REGIME*

It is common knowledge how the Legislative Body was chosen under Napoleon. The senators merely nominated their cook's protégés. Nevertheless, such was the energy which the *cult of glory* inspired in the nation, such was its contempt for pettiness, that no chamber appointed during the Restoration won for itself so much esteem as that in which Durbach, Lâiné Bedoch, Raynouard, Suard and Flaugergues shone. The speeches of those worthy men consoled the nation. At that time everything connected with the government was debased.

The real royalists, the die-hards, the émigrés, affected to smile disdainfully at the words *Charter* and *liberal ideas*. They forgot that the man who had set them on their feet, the magnanimous Alexander,[585] had recommended the Senate to give France *strong and liberal institutions*. A thousand sinister rumours on every side informed the nation of the imminent resurrection of the Old Regime.

581 [Jacques-Louis David. The leading painter of revolutionary and Napoleonic France.]

582 [Secretary to the Académie française and a founding editor of the *Encyclopédie*.]

583 [Historian and secretary to the Académie française.]

584 Which explains why self-respecting people dislike becoming authors and putting their names to the titles of their books. I have counted 11 violations of the Charter. But the *Edinburgh Review* [No. 51, June 1816] accounts for 14 or 15, I think.

585 [Emperor Alexander.]

The favourite ministers, D[ambray] F[errand], M[ontesquiou], B[lacas],[586] missed no opportunity of professing the doctrine of absolute monarchy. They openly regretted the Old France in which, in every heart, the sacred words *God and the King*[587] had been inextricably entwined.

Needless to say, the equally sacred rights of the *faithful nobility* were not overlooked. Possibly not everyone remembers that those rights consisted of 144 separate taxes.[588] Finally, the Duke of Feltre,[589] the minister of war who did not even enjoy the fame of military achievements,[590] dared to say when addressing the chamber: 'If the king wills it the law wills it', and he became a marshal. Finally – who would believe it? – M. de Chateaubriand[591] did not appear to be sufficiently royalist, and his reply to General Carnot's memorandum was attacked in this sense.[592]

586 Careful.

587 Address from the Paris clergy to the king, August 15th, 1814.

588 And several of which joined a contempt for the human race to ...

589 [General Clarke.]

590 Careful.

591 [Author of *The Genius of Christianity*, 1802. Opposed to Napoleon since 1804, he published in 1814 *On Bonaparte, the Bourbons, and the Need to Rally to our Legitimate Rulers*.]

592 *Journal des Débats*, October [1814].

83 THE NATIONAL PROPERTY[593]

On 4 June the members of the old *parlement*[594] had met at the house of M. Lepelletier de Morfontaine[595] and had formally protested against the Charter. They had therefore received the treatment accorded to all minorities: 'Either submit to the law or go.'[596] No one seemed to notice this ridiculous protest and the nobility immediately prepared to make a similar one.

In France, where everyone aspires to form a regiment so as to become a colonel, deeds such as these have their importance. They are the country's conspiracies. A statesmanlike ruler would have punished them severely.

At Savenay, in the Loire-Inférieure, a sermon was preached on 5 March. The faithful were told that those who did not restore their property to the nobles, and to the priests as representatives of the monks, would suffer the fate of Jezebel and be eaten by dogs.[597]

Among the petitions which the Legislative Body refused to read, there were nearly three hundred from individuals who complained that their priests had refused them absolution because they owned national property. Now eight million Frenchmen are in that position, and they are the eight million with the most energy. In October royalist newspapers reported that at a party which the Prince of Neuchâtel had given at Grosbois for the king and the royal family, the prince had paid homage to His Majesty by giving him a roll of parchment containing the title-deeds to this national property. The king kept the deeds for an hour and then returned them to the marshal with the gracious words: 'These title-deeds cannot be in better hands.' Berthier complained to the king of this ridiculous story and – though I find this hard to believe – he

593 [Estates confiscated from nobles and the Church during the Revolution and resold.]

594 [Abolished in 1789, the *parlement* was a law court with authority to veto royal edicts.]

595 Translated literally from J. Hobhouse, Vol. 1, p. 96, 2nd edn.

596 Paley.

597 [In the second book of Kings, chapter 9, verse 10.]

was never able to get permission to have it denied in the newspapers.[598]

M. Ferrand proposed a very just law aimed at restoring their unsold property to the émigrés.[599]

He dared to speak in the tribune of 'the sacred and inviolable rights which those who had always followed the straight and narrow path still have to the estates of which they were stripped by the storms of the Revolution'. M. Ferrand later received the blue ribbon of the order of the Holy Ghost.

This speech enflamed France. People who would live peacefully and submissively under the rule of the Dey of Algiers[600] will wax furious at any hint of a threat to their estates.

84 NAPOLEON ON THE ISLAND OF ELBA[601]

It is time to return to the island of Elba. Napoleon, who while shaving read in a newspaper the speech of the minister Ferrand, sent for General Bertrand and told him: ...

598 Omit, to be on the safe side.

599 Moreover, the émigrés were to have restored to them up to a maximum of 6,000 francs income *per capita* and in state bonds all that had been justly taken from them when they left France to call foreigners into the country.

600 [Algeria was ruled by a Turkish overlord or Dey until conquered by France in 1830.]

601 Corrected on 21 January and 15 June 1818.

85 *RETURN FROM THE ISLAND OF ELBA*[602]

Baron Jermanovski, Colonel of the Guards Lancers, gave the following account to his friend General Kosciusko.[603] It was gallantry speaking in the presence of heroism.

The colonel began by saying that his command was at Porto Longone,[604] where beside his lancers he had a garrison of three hundred infantrymen. Six days before leaving, the emperor had sent for him to inquire the number of ships in his harbour. He received orders to charter them, to provision them and to prevent the departure of the most insignificant ship. The day before the embarkation he received orders to pay three thousand francs for a road Napoleon was having built. He had almost forgotten the embargo when on 26 February, while he was working in his little garden, one of the aides-de-camp to the emperor brought him the order to embark all his men at six o'clock that evening and to rejoin the flotilla off Porto Ferraio the same night at an appointed hour. It was so late that the colonel was unable to finish embarking his men before seven-thirty. They left immediately. With his little fleet he reached the imperial brig *Inconstant* which was already under sail. On mounting to the deck he found the emperor, who greeted him with the questions: 'How goes it? Where are all your people?'

Colonel Jermanovski learned from his colleagues that the garrison of Porto Ferraio had only received orders to embark that same day at one o'clock and that they had come aboard only at four o'clock. The emperor with Generals Bertrand and Drouot and his staff had arrived at eight o'clock and then a single cannon-shot had given the signal and they had set sail. The flotilla consisted of the *Inconstant* with twenty-six guns, the bomb-ships *Etoile* and *Caroline,* and four feluccas. On board the *Inconstant* were four hundred men of the old guard.

602 16 June 1818. I think ... is effective. More developed style to be moving.

603 [Polish patriot.] Hobhouse, p. 115. See the accounts in the *Moniteur,* which are correct.

604 [On Elba.]

No one knew where they were going. The old grenadiers, on leaving shore to go on board had cried: 'Paris or death.'

The wind, which had been in the south and rather strong at first, soon dropped to a flat calm. When day dawned they had done no more than six leagues and the flotilla found itself between the islands of Elba and Capri, in sight of the English and French cruisers. Nevertheless the night had not been wholly lost, as the soldiers and crew had been engaged in altering the colour of the hulk of the brig from yellow and grey to black and white. This was a wretched way in which to escape the observation of those interested in watching the island of Elba.

The question arose of putting back into Porto Ferraio, but Napoleon ordered them to continue on their way, determined, should the need arise, to attack the French cruisers. In the waters around Elba there were two frigates and a brig. In fact it was thought that they would be more inclined to come and join the imperial fleet than to fight against it. But any fairly determined royalist officer could have had the first shot fired and carried his crew with him.

At noon the wind freshened; by four o'clock the flotilla was standing off Leghorn. They sighted three warships and one of them, a brig, sailed towards the *Inconstant*. The portholes were closed. The soldiers of the guard removed their caps and lay down on the deck. The emperor planned to board the brig, though only as a last resort, in case the royal ship refused to allow the *Inconstant* to continue on her way without boarding her. The *Zéphir,* which was the name of the brig flying the white pennant, came full sail towards the *Inconstant,* and the two vessels passed side by side. Captain Andrieux,[605] having been hailed by Lieutenant Taillade of the *Inconstant* who was a friend of his, contented himself with asking the *Inconstant's* destination. 'To Genoa', replied Taillade and he added that he would be glad to execute any commissions if he had any. Andrieux replied in the negative, and in parting called out: 'How is the emperor?' To which Napoleon himself replied: 'Perfectly well', and the two ships drew apart.

605 See the *Biographie.*

The wind increased during the night of the 27th, and on 28 February[606] at daybreak they had a glimpse of the coast of Provence. They caught sight of a seventy-four-gun vessel that was apparently sailing to Sardinia.[607] Colonel Jermanovski says that until that moment it had been generally believed in the flotilla that they were on their way to Naples. Many questions were put to the officers by the men and even by the officers to the emperor, who made no reply. Then finally he said smiling: 'Well, it is France!'

At these words everyone crowded round him to hear his instructions. The first measure which he took was to order two or three of the commissaries of his little army to make ready their pens and papers. At his dictation they wrote the proclamations to the army and to the French people. When these had been written they were read aloud. Napoleon made several alterations. He then had them re-read and once again corrected them. Finally, after at least ten different versions had been made, he said: 'That's good, make copies of them.' At these words all the soldiers and sailors who could write lay down on the deck. Paper was issued to them, and they had soon made a sufficient number of copies of the proclamations for them to be published at the time of the landing. They then busied themselves making tricolour cockades. They only had to tear off the outer edge of the cockade of the island of Elba. At first, on his arrival at the island, the emperor's cockade had been even more like the French one. He subsequently had it changed so as not to arouse suspicion.

During these various arrangements, and in general throughout the latter part of the voyage, the officers, soldiers and sailors surrounded Napoleon, who slept little and remained almost always on deck. Lying down, sitting, standing or strolling familiarly around him, they felt the need to talk to him. They asked incessant questions, to which he replied without the least sign of impatience, although several were not a little indiscreet. They wanted to know his opinion on several important living personages, on the kings, marshals and

606 Check in Hobhouse, whether the 28th or the lst March.

607 Is this right? Doesn't he [Hobhouse] mean leaving?

ministers of the past. They started discussing with him certain well-known episodes[608] in his own campaigns and even in his domestic policy. He knew how to satisfy or how to elude their curiosity and frequently entered into great detail on the subject of his own conduct and that of his enemies. Whether he examined his contemporaries' claims to fame or whether he recalled the military events of ancient and modern times, all his answers were expressed in an easy tone of noble frankness and familiarity which delighted the soldiers. 'Every word', said Colonel Jermanovski, 'seemed to us worthy to be preserved for posterity.'

The emperor spoke unreservedly of his present undertaking, of the difficulties it presented and of his hopes. 'In cases like this,' he said, 'you must think slowly but act quickly. I have long meditated this idea; I have examined it with all the attention of which I am capable. I have no need to tell you of the deathless glory and the advantages that will be ours if our undertaking is crowned by success. If we fail, I shall not attempt to disguise from soldiers who since childhood have braved[609] death in all its forms and in so many climates the fate that awaits us. We know it and we despise it.'

Such were almost the last words he spoke before his little fleet dropped anchor in the Gulf of Juan. Those last words had an air of having been more prepared. It was like a kind of address to his companions, to whom perhaps he would not have time to speak in the midst of the hazards they were about to face.

On 28 February Antibes had been in sight since noon and on 1 March, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the fleet dropped anchor in the bay. A captain and twenty-five men were sent to capture any battery which might dominate the landing-place. Finding that there were no batteries, the officer on his own initiative marched to Antibes. He entered the town and was taken prisoner. At five o'clock the troops landed on the shore nearest to Cannes. The emperor was the last to leave the brig. He rested for a time in a bivouac that had been prepared for him in a small meadow among the olive trees, close to the sea.

608 Instead of episodes, perhaps epochs.

609 Account which I think touching. 1 August 1818.

Nowadays the peasants show visitors the little table on which he ate his meal![610]

The emperor sent for Jermanovski and asked if he knew how many horses had been brought from Elba. The colonel replied that he had no idea and that so far as he was concerned, he had not embarked a single horse.

'Very well,' said Napoleon, 'I have brought four horses. Let us divide them. I think that I should have one. Since you command my cavalry you will have the second. Bertrand, Drouot and Cambronne[611] will have the remaining two.'

The horses had been landed a little farther down on the beach. Accompanied by his staff, Napoleon left the bivouac and went on foot to where the horses were to be found. The emperor walked by himself, questioning a few peasants he met. Jermanovski and the generals followed, carrying their saddles. When they reached the horses, Grand Marshal Bertrand refused to take one. He said that he would walk. Drouot did the same.[612] Cambronne and Molat each mounted a horse. The emperor gave Colonel Jermanovski a handful of napoleons and told him to get some horses from the peasants. The colonel gave the peasants whatever they asked and bought fifteen horses. They were harnessed to three pieces of cannon brought from Elba and to another cannon which Princess Pauline[613] had given to her brother.

Someone came to tell of the failure at Antibes. 'We have begun badly,' said the emperor, 'the best we can do now is to march as fast as we can and take the mountain passes before news of our landing reaches that far.' The moon rose and Napoleon with his little army set out at eleven o'clock. They marched all night. The peasants in the villages through which they passed remained silent. They shrugged their shoulders and shook their heads when told that the emperor was back. At Grasse, a town of 6,000 inhabitants through which the emperor passed,

610 December 27th, 1817. Hobhouse, p. 121.

611 [Drouot and Cambronne were to command the Imperial Guard at Waterloo.]

612 Hobhouse, pp. 122, 123, 130.

613 [Pauline Borghese, Napoleon's favourite sister.]

the locals thought that pirates had landed, and everything was in a state of alarm. Shops and windows were closed, and the crowds gathered in the streets; despite the national cockades and the cries of *Long live the emperor* from the soldiers, they let them pass without giving the least sign of approval or of disapproval. They rested for an hour on a slope outside the town. The soldiers began to look at one another with uncertainty and sadness. All of a sudden they saw a troop of people from the town coming towards them bearing food and shouting *Long live the emperor!*

From then on[614] the peasants showed themselves glad that Napoleon had landed, and his progress was more of a triumph than an invasion. The cannons and the coach were left at Grasse, and since the roads were very bad in the course of this first march, which was of twenty-five leagues, Napoleon frequently went on foot in the midst of his grenadiers. When they complained of being tired, he called them his *grumblers* and they for their part, whenever he chanced to stumble, would laugh aloud at his clumsiness.

On the evening of the 2nd they reached the village of Seranon, twenty leagues from Grasse. During this march, among the soldiers Napoleon's names were: *notre petit tondu*[615] and *Jean de l'épée*.[616] Napoleon would often hear these names repeated in a subdued voice as he climbed the ascent in the midst of his veterans. On the 3rd he slept at Barrème, and dined at Digne on 4 March. 'It was either at Digne or at Castellane', the colonel tells us, 'that Napoleon undertook to make the keeper of the inn in which he was staying cry: *Long live the emperor.* This the man resolutely refused to do and cried: *Long live the king*. Instead of being angry, Napoleon praised him for his loyalty and only asked him to drink his health, to which mine host agreed most willingly.'

At Digne the proclamations[617] to the army and to the French people were printed and distributed in the Dauphiné with such speed that Napoleon found the towns and villages along

614 Hobhouse, p. 124.

615 [The little fellow with close-cropped hair.]

616 [The little swordsman.]

617 Hobhouse, p. 125.

his route all ready to welcome him. Up to that time, however, he had only been joined by one recruit. This soldier had been met on the road by Colonel Jermanovski, who undertook to convert him. When the colonel told him that the emperor was about to arrive, the soldier began to laugh heartily: 'Good,' he said, 'now I shall have something to tell them at home this evening.' The colonel had great difficulty in persuading him that he was not joking. Then the soldier asked: 'Where do you intend sleeping tonight?' and upon learning the name of the village, 'Very well,' he replied, 'my mother lives three leagues from here, I am going to say goodbye to her and I will be with you this evening.' That very evening indeed the grenadier clapped the colonel on the shoulder, and was not satisfied until the latter promised him that he would tell the emperor that Grenadier Melon had come to share the fortunes of his former master.

On 5 March Napoleon spent the night at Gap, where he was guarded by only ten horsemen and forty grenadiers. The same day General Cambronne with forty grenadiers occupied the bridge and the ancient fortress of Sisteron;[618] but Melon was still the only new recruit, so that at Saint-Bonnet and in other villages the inhabitants wanted to ring the tocsin and rise *en masse* to accompany the little army. They obstructed the roads and frequently impeded the advance of the army so as to see and to touch the emperor, who sometimes went on foot.

The roads were appalling on account of the melting snows. A pack-mule loaded with gold slipped over a precipice. The emperor appeared much put out. Two hours were spent trying to pull the mule out. Finally, so as not to lose any more time, the emperor was forced to leave it behind. The peasants did well in the spring.

On 6 March the emperor slept at Gap, and General Cambronne and his advance-guard of forty men at La Mure. There the outpost of the Grenoble garrison, six hundred strong, refused to parley with General Cambronne. Colonel Jermanovski, who was at the head of the advance guard, found a mountain pass near Vizille which was occupied by troops carrying the white flag of the Bourbons. He wanted to speak, but an officer advanced towards him calling out,

[618] Hobhouse, p. 126.

'Withdraw, I can have no communication with you. Keep your distance or my men will fire.'

The colonel tried to win him over by telling him that he would have to speak to Napoleon and not with him, but the officer continued to proffer threats and Jermanovski went to tell Napoleon of his lack of success. Napoleon said to him with a smile: 'If that is how it is, I shall have to see what I can do.' He dismounted and ordered some fifty of his grenadiers to follow him with arms reversed. He walked quietly to the pass where he found a battalion of the 5th of the Line, a company of sappers and one of engineers, seven or eight hundred men in all.

The commanding officer continued to shout, frequently at the emperor himself, saying: 'It's an impostor, it is not he.' From time to time this officer would reprimand his troops and order them to open fire. The soldiers remained silent and motionless. When they saw Napoleon's men advancing, it looked for a moment as if they would sight their rifles. Napoleon made his grenadiers halt, and then went quietly and all by himself up to the battalion. When he was quite close to the front line, he stopped short, looked at them calmly and opening his great-coat cried: 'Look, it is I, don't you recognize me? If there is one soldier among you who wishes to kill his emperor let him fire, for now is the moment.'

They were won over in a second and amidst redoubled cries of *Long live the emperor,* they flung themselves into the arms of the guards.[619]

Shortly before the soldiers of the 5th broke up, Napoleon approached a grenadier who had his rifle at the ready and, taking hold of one of his moustaches, he said: 'And you, old Moustache, were you not with us at Marengo?'

That is a simple account of one of those actions which in every century and in every country show nations who are the men for whom they should march and act.

Napoleon's companions considered the action of this troop of seven hundred men to have been decisive. They saw in this incident that the emperor had not been mistaken and that the

[619] Hobhouse, pp. 126–7.

army was still for him.[620] The new troops donned the tricolour cockade, grouped themselves around the eagles of the Army of Elba, and entered Vizille with them to the joyful acclamations of its inhabitants. This little town has always been known for its patriotism. It may be said that it was there that the French Revolution and world freedom began. It was at the château at Vizille that the first meeting of the Estates of the Dauphiné took place.[621]

While advancing towards Grenoble, Colonel Jermanovski was joined by an officer who came up to him at full speed and said: 'Permit me to salute you in the name of Colonel Charles Labédoyère.'

This young colonel soon appeared at the head of the greater part of his regiment, the 7th of the Line, made up from the remains of the 112th Regiment and several others. At four in the afternoon, the colonel had escaped from Grenoble; when he was some distance away he pulled an eagle from his pocket, placed it on the end of a pole and kissed it in front of his regiment, who instantly shouted *Long live the emperor!*[622] He then stuck a knife into a drum filled with tricolour cockades which he distributed to his regiment. However, General Marchand, who remained loyal to the king, succeeded in making part of the regiment return to Grenoble. The town garrison had been increased by the 11th Regiment of the Line and part of the 7th, which had been sent on from Chambéry. The garrison was, moreover, composed of 2,000 men of the 3rd Pioneer Regiment, of two battalions of the 5th of the Line and of the 4th Artillery Regiment, precisely the same regiment in which, twenty-five years before, Napoleon had been given command of a company.

Grenoble is a poorly fortified town that is maintained solely to provide artillery for the chain of the Alps, in the middle of

620 Hobhouse, p. 128.

621 [1788. The Estates of the Dauphiné at Vizille demanded greater representation for the Third Estate.]

622 [Labédoyère was tried and shot by the Bourbon authorities in August 1815.]

which the town lies.[623] On the side of the town overlooking the plain there is only a wall, rising in terraces some twenty feet high, with a small stream flowing in front of it. It was with such absurd fortifications as these that a few months later, on their own initiative, the inhabitants of Grenoble killed twelve hundred men of the Piedmontese army, consisting entirely of Napoleon's soldiers.[624]

When the great man approached the town on 7 March, the whole garrison was drawn up on the terraced ramparts, in the centre of which stands the Bonne Gate, facing the road to Vizille.[625] The cannons were loaded, the fuses lit and the National Guard was drawn up in reserve behind the garrison troops.

The Bonne Gate was closed at half-past eight. As Napoleon entered the little suburb of Saint-Joseph, Colonel Jermanovski, accompanied by eight Polish lancers, appeared before the Bonne Gate and demanded the keys. He was told that General Marchand had them. The colonel spoke to the soldiers, who remained silent. Soon Napoleon reached the little bridge outside the gate. He remained there for more than three-quarters of an hour, seated on a guard-stone.

General Marchand should have gone out onto the nearby rampart, fifty feet at most from the emperor's person, and shot him dead. He could have had twenty gentlemen to assist him. It would have been impossible to miss. With Napoleon dead everyone would have abandoned the cause. If Marchand's men feared to die an untimely death by being cut to pieces while firing, they could have taken up positions in the house of a certain Eymar which overlooked the ramparts on one side and, on the other, that part of the rampart enclosed by the barracks. The truth is that at this highly critical moment any daring plan would have succeeded. It would have been equally easy to station twenty gentlemen in

623 [Grenoble was Stendhal's home town. The details here are his own.]

624 [Piedmont, annexed to France in 1802, was restored as an independent kingdom, together with Savoy, by the Congress of Vienna in 1815.]

625 Hobhouse, p. 129.

appeared demented, so much had enthusiasm and affection caused them to forget the most elementary precautions usually taken to avoid suffocating people. His officers succeeded in emptying the room for a time. They piled tables and chairs against the door to prevent a second invasion, but in vain. The crowd succeeded in pushing its way in again, and for two hours the emperor was lost in their midst, without a single soldier to protect him. He could have been killed a thousand times over if, among the royalists and priests, there had been one man of courage. Shortly afterwards, the crowd carried the Bonne Gate beneath the windows of the inn shouting, 'Napoleon, we were unable to offer you the keys of your faithful city of Grenoble, but here are its gates.'

The next day Napoleon reviewed his troops on the parade ground. There again he was surrounded by the townsfolk. Enthusiasm was at its height, yet it inspired none of the obsequiousness with which people are wont to approach kings. They shouted incessantly beneath his windows and to his face: 'No more conscription, we won't have it any longer, and we want a constitution.' A young man of Grenoble (M. Joseph Rey) presented the people's wishes in an address to Napoleon.

There was a young glove-maker of Grenoble, a M. Dumoulin. Two days before, another citizen of Grenoble had come to take refuge in his house. This man, newly arrived from Elba, had been a surgeon to the emperor. Dumoulin offered the emperor his services and one hundred thousand francs. Napoleon told him: 'I do not need money at present. I thank you. What I do need is people of determination.'

The emperor made the glove-maker an aide-de-camp and at once entrusted a mission to him of which the young man acquitted himself extremely well. Then and there this young man quitted a flourishing business.

Napoleon received the public authorities. He spoke to them at length, but his arguments were too exalted to be grasped by people who for fourteen successive years had grown used to being ruled by a rod of iron and to cherish no other feeling than fear of losing their stipends. They listened to him with an expression of stupidity, and he could not draw from them a single sincere remark. His real friends were the peasants and

the lower middle classes. Their words breathed a heroic patriotism. In an address printed at Grenoble, Napoleon thanked the people of the Dauphiné. Almost all the soldiers had their tricolour cockade hidden in their caps; they wore it again with unutterable joy. General Bertrand, who acted as chief-of-staff, ordered the Grenoble garrison to proceed to Lyons.

On the road from Grenoble to Lyons, Napoleon travelled much of the way without a single soldier at his side. His carriage was frequently forced to go at a walking pace because the peasants crammed the roads. They all wanted to speak to him, to touch him or at the very least to see him. They clambered onto his carriage and the horses that drew it, and pelted him from every side with bunches of violets and primroses. In a word, Napoleon was constantly enfolded in the arms of the people.

In the evening, near Rives, the peasants walked beside him for more than a league, lighting him on his way with hastily improvised torches, and singing a song which in two months had spread like wildfire and was of such a kind that priests, before granting absolution, asked those whom they confessed if they had sung it, and if the answer was 'yes', refused to reconcile them with God.[628]

At the village of Rives, Napoleon was not recognized at first. But when they realized who he was, the peasants came pouring into the inn, and when they saw how poor his supper was, they competed with each other in bringing him things to eat.

On 9 March the emperor slept at Bourgoin. Sometimes there were half a dozen hussars in front of his carriage, but generally there was no one, and he was nearly always three or four leagues in front of the troops. The grenadiers from Elba who had stayed in Grenoble, completely exhausted, soon wished to leave, but the most diligent among them reached Bourgoin just an hour after he had left, which gave them

[628] Insert here the song, in bad French, which seems to have been composed for the peasants and which expressed above all hatred and deep contempt for those who had betrayed him [Napoleon]. Among those named in it were Augereau, Marmont and Marchand. [All three generals had defected to the Bourbons in 1814.]

ample cause to swear. They told the peasants about his life on Elba, down to the last details. After the shared enthusiasm, the most striking characteristic in the relationship between the soldiers and peasants was this: seeing the soldiers' blue uniforms and caps all tattered and patched up with white thread, the peasants said to them: 'So the emperor had no money on Elba, since you are so badly turned out?'

'Oh, he did not want for money: he built, he made roads and changed the whole country. When he saw us looking glum, he would say: "Well, grumbler, are you still hankering after France?"

"'I'm just bored, Sire."

"'Then get busy and mend your uniform. We have everything you need in the stores. You won't always be bored." And, said the grenadiers, he set the example: his hat was as good as new. We could all see very well that he had it in mind to lead us somewhere, but he didn't want to say anything definite. We were always being embarked and disembarked to mislead the people on the island.'

The emperor had his hat repaired at Grenoble, where he could easily have bought another one. The emperor had an old worn grey great-coat buttoned from top to bottom. He was so fat and tired that he often had to be lifted into his carriage. The village bigwigs concluded that perhaps he was doing it for show.

On the other side of La Verpillère, the carriage found itself brought to a standstill without there being any guards or crowds of peasants. Napoleon went up to the carriage of a tradesman which was also at a standstill ...[629]

86 JUDGEMENT ON NAPOLEON

Democracy or despotism are the first forms of government to confront mankind as it emerges from a state of savagery. This is the first stage of civilization. Aristocracy under one or more

629 Projected crossing at Miribel. Heavily laden waggons: no accident. Accident for the Count d'Artois.

leaders – and the kingdom of France before 1789 was nothing more than a religious and military aristocracy of gown and sword[630] – aristocracy, whatever name it is given, has everywhere replaced these inchoate forms of government. This is the second stage of civilization. Representative government under one or more leaders is a new, indeed a very new invention, which shapes and establishes a third stage of civilization. This sublime invention, a late but inevitable consequence of the invention of printing, is subsequent to Montesquieu.[631]

Napoleon was the finest product of the second stage of civilization. It is therefore quite ridiculous on the part of kings who seek to remain at this second stage of civilization to get their hack writers to attack this great man. Napoleon never understood the third stage of civilization. Where would he have studied it? Certainly not at the military academy at Brienne. The books of the Enlightenment or translations from the English did not penetrate into the royal schools, and after leaving school he had had no time for reading: he only had time to study mankind.

Napoleon is, therefore, a nineteenth-century tyrant. Whoever says tyrant says superior mind, and it is impossible for an outstanding genius not to absorb, almost unwittingly, the good sense that fills the air.

To understand this, one should read the life of Castruccio Castracani, the fourteenth-century tyrant of Lucca.[632] The resemblance between the two men is striking. It would be curious to follow in Napoleon's soul the struggle between the genius of tyranny and the profound power of reason which had made him a great man. One had to see his natural inclination for the nobility contending with the waves of contempt that rose to his eyes as soon as he observed them too closely. One felt strongly that, in all his acts against them,

630 [The French nobility traced its origins to the 'sword' – knights who fought for the king – or to the 'gown' (*la robe*) – lawyers and civil servants.]

631 [Montesquieu argued for a balanced constitution of king and Estates.]

632 In Machiavelli and better still in the original writers abridged by Pignotti.

his anger was that of a father. To those worthy people who may have some doubts on this subject, we would point to his rage against all that was truly liberal. This hatred would have become a frenzy had he been unaware of its strength. One had to see how well aware his foxy courtiers were of this nuance in the master's character.

From this point of view his ministers' reports make curious reading. In occasional sentences, or rather in adjectives and adverbs, is revealed the philosophy underlying the most petty and cowardly tyranny. No one as yet dared to say so plainly in a sentence. An impertinent adjective would reveal to the master his minister's heart. A few years more and his beloved auditors[633] to the Council of State would have given him a generation of ministers who, not having gained their political experience under the republic, would have blushed only for being inadequate courtiers. When one sees the consequences of this, one comes almost to rejoice at the fall of Napoleon.

The struggle of the great man's genius against the heart of a tyrant may be seen even better in his reign during the Hundred Days.[634] He sent for Benjamin Constant and for Sismondi.[635] He listened to them with apparent enjoyment, yet he soon returned enthusiastically to the base councils of Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély[636] and the Duke of Bassano.[637] Such men show how far he had already been corrupted by tyranny. At the time of Marengo[638] he would have repudiated them with scorn.

These two men destroyed him far more than did the battle of Waterloo. Yet no one can say that he lacked advice. At Lyons I saw one of his officers advise him in writing to abolish

633 [Stendhal was one such 1810–14.]

634 [From the return from Elba to Waterloo, March to June 1815.]

635 [Constant drafted the *Additional Act* of April 1815, in which Napoleon conceded a liberal constitution with a bicameral legislature, ministerial responsibility, relaxation of censorship and lowering of taxes. Sismondi was a Swiss liberal economist.]

636 [Member of the Council of State.]

637 [Maret.]

638 [1800.]

simultaneously both the new and the old nobility.[639] It was Regnault, I believe, who advised him to call his new constitution the *Additional Act*.[640] In the course of a single morning he lost the support of ten million Frenchmen,[641] the only ten million capable of fighting and of thinking. From then on those around him saw that his ruin was inevitable. How was he to defeat eleven hundred thousand soldiers advancing on France? What he needed was to pull off a political deal with the House of Austria;[642] and the more he avoided men of ability, the more the Allies welcomed them to their councils.

His justifications from Saint Helena strive to excuse him on the grounds of the extreme mediocrity of his family associates. But talent is never lacking: it bursts forth in plenty whenever it is sought. In the first place he kept Lucien away. He made insufficient use of Soult, Lezay-Marnezia, Levoyer d'Argenson, Thibaudeau, Count de Lapparent, Jean de Bry and a thousand others who would have come forward. Who, in the emperor's day, would have guessed the ability of Count Decazes?[643] The failures of his family are therefore a poor excuse. Napoleon had no men of ability because he wanted none. The mere presence of Regnault was enough to discourage all that was good.

It is fortunate for all these people that they should have had such successors.[644]

639 [That is, the pre-1789 titles of nobility and the imperial titles of nobility introduced by Napoleon.]

640 [*Acte additionnel aux constitutions de l'empire,* 1815 (Act supplementary to the constitutions of the empire). The object of the title was, by stressing continuity with previous imperial legislation, to avoid loss of face for Napoleon.]

641 [In a plebiscite of 5 million electors, 1½ million voted in favour of the *Additional Act,* 5,000 against. The remainder abstained.]

642 [That is, to split the Allies by a settlement with Austria.]

643 [Able prime minister under Louis XVIII.]

644 Adequate. But the style is cold and hard. 17 June 1818.

87 CONCLUSION

We have shown Napoleon possessed of those characteristics which appear to us to result from the most faithful accounts; we ourselves spent several years at his court.

He was a man endowed with amazing abilities and a dangerous ambition, by his talents the finest man to have appeared since Caesar, whom in our eyes he surpassed. He was born to brave adversity with firmness and majesty rather than to endure prosperity without letting it go to his head. Carried away to the point of frenzy when his passions met with opposition, yet more susceptible to friendship than to lasting hatred, tainted by some of the inevitable vices of a conqueror, yet no more prodigal of blood, no more indifferent to humanity than men like Caesar, Alexander or Frederick the Great, to whom he will be compared and whose fame will diminish daily.

Napoleon was engaged in several wars which shed torrents of blood, but in none of them, with the exception of the war in Spain, was he the aggressor.[645] He was on the point of transforming the continent of Europe into one vast monarchy. This plan, if it ever existed, is his sole excuse for not having revolutionized the states which he conquered, and for failing to turn them into supports for France, by making them follow the same moral path. Posterity will say that it was in repelling the attacks of his neighbours that he expanded his empire.

'In instigating wars against me,' he said, 'circumstances gave me the means to enlarge my empire, and I did not fail to take advantage of them.'

His greatness of soul in misfortune and his resignation have been equalled by some but surpassed by none. Mr Warden often bears witness to these qualities, and we may add that they were devoid of any ostentation. His way of life at Saint Helena is completely unaffected. In modern times it is perhaps this which puts us most in mind of Plutarch's heroes. One of those who visited him at Elba expressed surprise at the

645 [Stendhal's claims in this paragraph, which echo Napoleon's at St Helena, are highly debatable.]

admirable calm with which he bore his change of fortune. He replied:

'The reason, I think, is that everyone was more taken aback by it than I. I have no very high opinion of mankind and I have always mistrusted good fortune. Moreover, I have known little enjoyment: my brothers have been far more kingly than I. They have had all the pleasures of royalty; I have known almost nothing but its demands.'

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FROM ENLIGHTENMENT TO ROMANTICISM, c.1780–1830

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